

Collected Works of

Lord Dunsany

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Series Eight

The Collected Works of

LORD DUNSANY

(1878-1957)



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The Collected Works of

LORD DUNSANY



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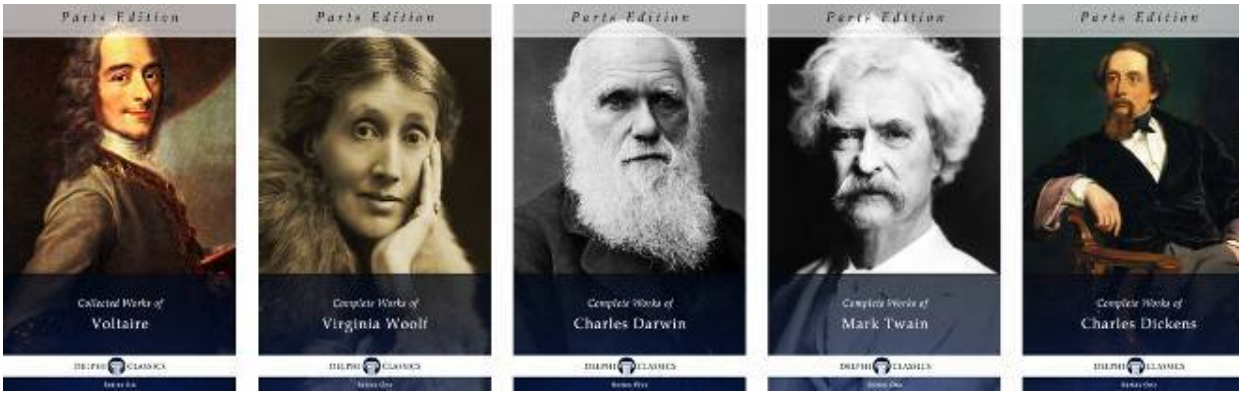
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The Novel



Park Square, London, near Regent's Park — Dunsany's birthplace



Although born in London, Edward John Morton Drax Plunkett, later eighteenth Baron Dunsany, was raised at his mother's house, Dunstall Priory near the village of Shoreham in Kent.

DON RODRIGUEZ: CHRONICLES OF SHADOW VALLEY



OR, THE CHRONICLES OF RODRIGUEZ

Lord Dunsany's first novel was published in 1922. Although issued simultaneously in Britain and America, the novel had different titles in each market – in Britain, it was issued as *The Chronicles of Rodriguez*, while in America is was entitled *Don Rodriguez: Chronicles of Shadow Valley*.

It is an adventure story, as well as a coming of age narrative, set in the mythical 'golden age' of Spain (in a preface, the author professes to being 'unable to give the reader' the exact date of the setting). In the picaresque tradition of Cervantes' masterpiece *Don Quixote*, the story relates, in a series of separate 'chronicles', the adventures of the title character as he attempts to find a place in the world, having been excluded from the inheritance of the family castle.

DON RODRIGUEZ

CHRONICLES OF SHADOW VALLEY

By

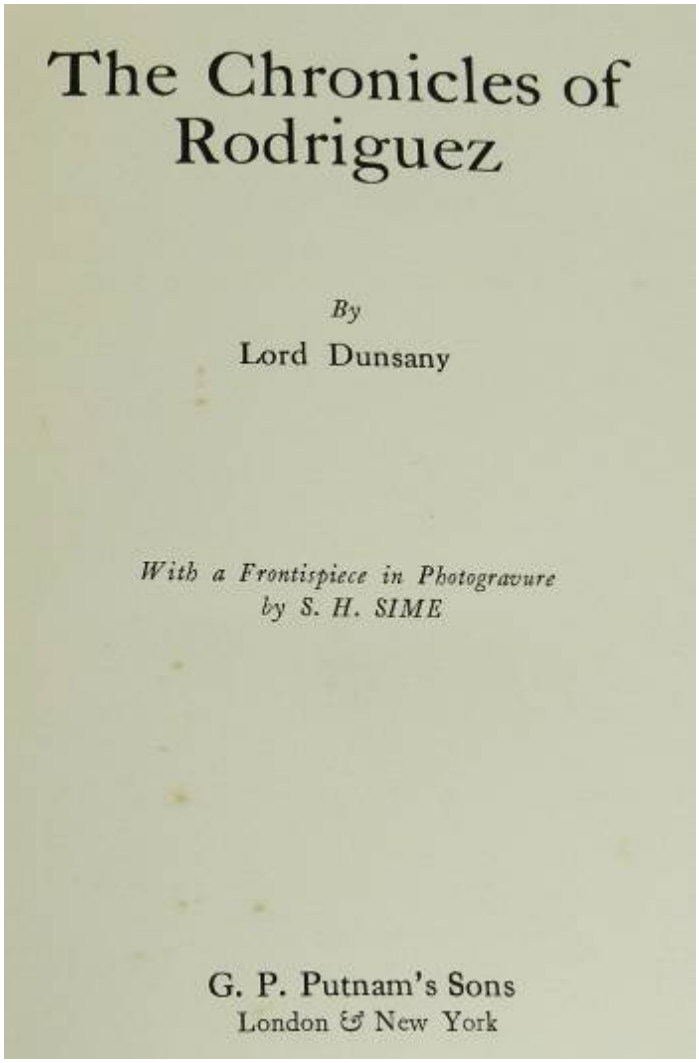
LORD DUNSANY

G. P. PUTNAM'S SONS
NEW YORK AND LONDON
The Knickerbocker Press
1922

Title page of the first American edition

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The Chronicles of Rodriguez
By
Lord Dunsany
With a Frontispiece in Photogravure by S. H. SIME
G. P. Putnam's Sons
London & New York

Title page of the British first edition



Frontispiece of the British first edition

THE FIRST CHRONICLE

HOW HE MET AND SAID FAREWELL TO MINE HOST OF THE DRAGON AND KNIGHT

Being convinced that his end was nearly come, and having lived long on earth (and all those years in Spain, in the golden time), the Lord of the Valleys of Arguento Harez, whose heights see not Valladolid, called for his eldest son. And so he addressed him when he was come to his chamber, dim with its strange red hangings and august with the splendour of Spain: “O eldest son of mine, your younger brother being dull and clever, on whom those traits that women love have not been bestowed by God; and know my eldest son that here on earth, and for ought I know Hereafter, but certainly here on earth, these women be the arbiters of all things; and how this be so God knoweth only, for they are vain and variable, yet it is surely so: your younger brother then not having been given those ways that women prize, and God knows why they prize them for they are vain ways that I have in my mind and that won me the Valleys of Arguento Harez, from whose heights Angelico swore he saw Valladolid once, and that won me moreover also ... but that is long ago and is all gone now ... ah well, well ... what was I saying?” And being reminded of his discourse, the old lord continued, saying, “For himself he will win nothing, and therefore I will leave him these my valleys, for not unlikely it was for some sin of mine that his spirit was visited with dullness, as Holy Writ sets forth, the sins of the fathers being visited on the children; and thus I make him amends. But to you I leave my long, most flexible, ancient Castilian blade, which infidels dreaded if old songs be true. Merry and lithe it is, and its true temper singeth when it meets another blade as two friends sing when met after many years. It is most subtle, nimble and exultant; and what it will not win for you in the wars, that shall be won for you by your mandolin, for you have a way with it that goes well with the old airs of Spain. And choose, my son, rather a moonlight night when you sing under those curved balconies that I knew, ah me, so well; for there is much advantage in the moon. In the first place maidens see in the light of the moon, especially in the Spring, more romance than you might credit, for it adds for them a mystery to the darkness which the night has not when it is merely black. And if any statue

should gleam on the grass near by, or if the magnolia be in blossom, or even the nightingale singing, or if anything be beautiful in the night, in any of these things also there is advantage; for a maiden will attribute to her lover all manner of things that are not his at all, but are only outpourings from the hand of God. There is this advantage also in the moon, that, if interrupters come, the moonlight is better suited to the play of a blade than the mere darkness of night; indeed but the merry play of my sword in the moonlight was often a joy to see, it so flashed, so danced, so sparkled. In the moonlight also one makes no unworthy stroke, but hath scope for those fair passes that Sevastiani taught, which were long ago the wonder of Madrid."

The old lord paused, and breathed for a little space, as it were gathering breath for his last words to his son. He breathed deliberately, then spoke again. "I leave you," he said, "well content that you have the two accomplishments, my son, that are most needful in a Christian man, skill with the sword and a way with the mandolin. There be other arts indeed among the heathen, for the world is wide and hath full many customs, but these two alone are needful." And then with that grand manner that they had at that time in Spain, although his strength was failing, he gave to his eldest son his Castilian sword. He lay back then in the huge, carved, canopied bed; his eyes closed, the red silk curtains rustled, and there was no sound of his breathing. But the old lord's spirit, whatever journey it purposed, lingered yet in its ancient habitation, and his voice came again, but feebly now and rambling; he muttered awhile of gardens, such gardens no doubt as the hidalgos guarded in that fertile region of sunshine in the proudest period of Spain; he would have known no others. So for awhile his memory seemed to stray, half blind among those perfumed earthly wonders; perhaps among these memories his spirit halted, and tarried those last few moments, mistaking those Spanish gardens, remembered by moonlight in Spring, for the other end of his journey, the glades of Paradise. However it be, it tarried. These rambling memories ceased and silence fell again, with scarcely the sound of breathing. Then gathering up his strength for the last time and looking at his son, "The sword to the wars," he said. "The mandolin to the balconies." With that he fell back dead.

Now there were no wars at that time so far as was known in Spain, but that old lord's eldest son, regarding those last words of his father as a commandment, determined then and there in that dim, vast chamber to gird his legacy to him and seek for the wars, wherever the wars might be, so

soon as the obsequies of the sepulture were ended. And of those obsequies I tell not here, for they are fully told in the Black Books of Spain, and the deeds of that old lord's youth are told in the Golden Stories. The Book of Maidens mentions him, and again we read of him in Gardens of Spain. I take my leave of him, happy, I trust, in Paradise, for he had himself the accomplishments that he held needful in a Christian, skill with the sword and a way with the mandolin; and if there be some harder, better way to salvation than to follow that which we believe to be good, then are we all damned. So he was buried, and his eldest son fared forth with his legacy dangling from his girdle in its long, straight, lovely scabbard, blue velvet, with emeralds on it, fared forth on foot along a road of Spain. And though the road turned left and right and sometimes nearly ceased, as though to let the small wild flowers grow, out of sheer good will such as some roads never have; though it ran west and east and sometimes south, yet in the main it ran northward, though wandered is a better word than ran, and the Lord of the Valleys of Arguento Harez who owned no valleys, or anything but a sword, kept company with it looking for the wars. Upon his back he had slung his mandolin. Now the time of the year was Spring, not Spring as we know it in England, for it was but early March, but it was the time when Spring coming up out of Africa, or unknown lands to the south, first touches Spain, and multitudes of anemones come forth at her feet.

Thence she comes north to our islands, no less wonderful in our woods than in Andalusian valleys, fresh as a new song, fabulous as a rune, but a little pale through travel, so that our flowers do not quite flare forth with all the myriad blaze of the flowers of Spain.

And all the way as he went the young man looked at the flame of those southern flowers, flashing on either side of him all the way, as though the rainbow had been broken in Heaven and its fragments fallen on Spain. All the way as he went he gazed at those flowers, the first anemones of the year; and long after, whenever he sang to old airs of Spain, he thought of Spain as it appeared that day in all the wonder of Spring; the memory lent a beauty to his voice and a wistfulness to his eyes that accorded not ill with the theme of the songs he sang, and were more than once to melt proud hearts deemed cold. And so gazing he came to a town that stood on a hill, before he was yet tired, though he had done nigh twenty of those flowery miles of Spain; and since it was evening and the light was fading away, he went to an inn and drew his sword in the twilight and knocked with the hilt

of it on the oaken door. The name of it was the Inn of the Dragon and Knight. A light was lit in one of the upper windows, the darkness seemed to deepen at that moment, a step was heard coming heavily down a stairway; and having named the inn to you, gentle reader, it is time for me to name the young man also, the landless lord of the Valleys of Arguento Harez, as the step comes slowly down the inner stairway, as the gloaming darkens over the first house in which he has ever sought shelter so far from his father's valleys, as he stands upon the threshold of romance. He was named Rodriguez Trinidad Fernandez, Concepcion Henrique Maria; but we shall briefly name him Rodriguez in this story; you and I, reader, will know whom we mean; there is no need therefore to give him his full names, unless I do it here and there to remind you.

The steps came thumping on down the inner stairway, different windows took the light of the candle, and none other shone in the house; it was clear that it was moving with the steps all down that echoing stairway. The sound of the steps ceased to reverberate upon the wood, and now they slowly moved over stone flags; Rodriguez now heard breathing, one breath with every step, and at length the sound of bolts and chains undone and the breathing now very close. The door was opened swiftly; a man with mean eyes, and expression devoted to evil, stood watching him for an instant; then the door slammed to again, the bolts were heard going back again to their places, the steps and the breathing moved away over the stone floor, and the inner stairway began again to echo.

"If the wars are here," said Rodriguez to himself and his sword, "good, and I sleep under the stars." And he listened in the street for the sound of war and, hearing none, continued his discourse. "But if I have not come as yet to the wars I sleep beneath a roof."

For the second time therefore he drew his sword, and began to strike methodically at the door, noting the grain in the wood and hitting where it was softest. Scarcely had he got a good strip of the oak to look like coming away, when the steps once more descended the wooden stair and came lumbering over the stones; both the steps and the breathing were quicker, for mine host of the Dragon and Knight was hurrying to save his door.

When he heard the sound of the bolts and chains again Rodriguez ceased to beat upon the door: once more it opened swiftly, and he saw mine host before him, eyeing him with those bad eyes; of too much girth, you might have said, to be nimble, yet somehow suggesting to the swift intuition of

youth, as Rodriguez looked at him standing upon his door-step, the spirit and shape of a spider, who despite her ungainly build is agile enough in her way.

Mine host said nothing; and Rodriguez, who seldom concerned himself with the past, holding that the future is all we can order the scheme of (and maybe even here he was wrong), made no mention of bolts or door and merely demanded a bed for himself for the night.

Mine host rubbed his chin; he had neither beard nor moustache but wore hideous whiskers; he rubbed it thoughtfully and looked at Rodriguez. Yes, he said, he could have a bed for the night. No more words he said, but turned and led the way; while Rodriguez, who could sing to the mandolin, wasted none of his words on this discourteous object. They ascended the short oak stairway down which mine host had come, the great timbers of which were gnawed by a myriad rats, and they went by passages with the light of one candle into the interior of the inn, which went back farther from the street than the young man had supposed; indeed he perceived when they came to the great corridor at the end of which was his appointed chamber, that here was no ordinary inn, as it had appeared from outside, but that it penetrated into the fastness of some great family of former times which had fallen on evil days. The vast size of it, the noble design where the rats had spared the carving, what the moths had left of the tapestries, all testified to that; and, as for the evil days, they hung about the place, evident even by the light of one candle guttering with every draught that blew from the haunts of the rats, an inseparable heirloom for all who disturbed those corridors.

And so they came to the chamber.

Mine host entered, bowed without grace in the doorway, and extended his left hand, pointing into the room. The draughts that blew from the rat-holes in the wainscot, or the mere action of entering, beat down the flame of the squat, guttering candle so that the chamber remained dim for a moment, in spite of the candle, as would naturally be the case. Yet the impression made upon Rodriguez was as of some old darkness that had been long undisturbed and that yielded reluctantly to that candle's intrusion, a darkness that properly became the place and was a part of it and had long been so, in the face of which the candle appeared an ephemeral thing devoid of grace or dignity or tradition. And indeed there was room for darkness in that chamber, for the walls went up and up into such an altitude that you

could scarcely see the ceiling, at which mine host's eyes glanced, and Rodriguez followed his look.

He accepted his accommodation with a nod; as indeed he would have accepted any room in that inn, for the young are swift judges of character, and one who had accepted such a host was unlikely to find fault with rats or the profusion of giant cobwebs, dark with the dust of years, that added so much to the dimness of that sinister inn. They turned now and went back, in the wake of that guttering candle, till they came again to the humbler part of the building. Here mine host, pushing open a door of blackened oak, indicated his dining-chamber. There a long table stood, and on it parts of the head and hams of a boar; and at the far end of the table a plump and sturdy man was seated in shirt-sleeves feasting himself on the boar's meat. He leaped up at once from his chair as soon as his master entered, for he was the servant at the Dragon and Knight; mine host may have said much to him with a flash of his eyes, but he said no more with his tongue than the one word, "Dog": he then bowed himself out, leaving Rodriguez to take the only chair and to be waited upon by its recent possessor. The boar's meat was cold and gnarled, another piece of meat stood on a plate on a shelf and a loaf of bread near by, but the rats had had most of the bread: Rodriguez demanded what the meat was. "Unicorn's tongue," said the servant, and Rodriguez bade him set the dish before him, and he set to well content, though I fear the unicorn's tongue was only horse: it was a credulous age, as all ages are. At the same time he pointed to a three-legged stool that he perceived in a corner of the room, then to the table, then to the boar's meat, and lastly at the servant, who perceived that he was permitted to return to his feast, to which he ran with alacrity. "Your name?" said Rodriguez as soon as both were eating. "Morano," replied the servant, though it must not be supposed that when answering Rodriguez he spoke as curtly as this; I merely give the reader the gist of his answer, for he added Spanish words that correspond in our depraved and decadent language of to-day to such words as "top dog," "nut" and "boss," so that his speech had a certain grace about it in that far-away time in Spain.

I have said that Rodriguez seldom concerned himself with the past, but considered chiefly the future: it was of the future that he was thinking now as he asked Morano this question:

"Why did my worthy and entirely excellent host shut his door in my face?"

“Did he so?” said Morano.

“He then bolted it and found it necessary to put the chains back, doubtless for some good reason.”

“Yes,” said Morano thoughtfully, and looking at Rodriguez, “and so he might. He must have liked you.”

Verily Rodriguez was just the young man to send out with a sword and a mandolin into the wide world, for he had much shrewd sense. He never pressed a point, but when something had been said that might mean much he preferred to store it, as it were, in his mind and pass on to other things, somewhat as one might kill game and pass on and kill more and bring it all home, while a savage would cook the first kill where it fell and eat it on the spot. Pardon me, reader, but at Morano’s remark you may perhaps have exclaimed, “That is not the way to treat one you like.” Not so did Rodriguez. His attention passed on to notice Morano’s rings which he wore in great profusion upon his little fingers; they were gold and of exquisite work and had once held precious stones, as large gaps testified; in these days they would have been priceless, but in an age when workers only worked at arts that they understood, and then worked for the joy of it, before the word artistic became ridiculous, exquisite work went without saying; and as the rings were slender they were of little value. Rodriguez made no comment upon the rings; it was enough for him to have noticed them. He merely noted that they were not ladies’ rings, for no lady’s ring would have fitted on to any one of those fingers: the rings therefore of gallants: and not given to Morano by their owners, for whoever wore precious stone needed a ring to wear it in, and rings did not wear out like hose, which a gallant might give to a servant. Nor, thought he, had Morano stolen them, for whoever stole them would keep them whole, or part with them whole and get a better price. Besides Morano had an honest face, or a face at least that seemed honest in such an inn: and while these thoughts were passing through his mind Morano spoke again: “Good hams,” said Morano. He had already eaten one and was starting upon the next. Perhaps he spoke out of gratitude for the honour and physical advantage of being permitted to sit there and eat those hams, perhaps tentatively, to find out whether he might consume the second, perhaps merely to start a conversation, being attracted by the honest looks of Rodriguez.

“You are hungry,” said Rodriguez.

“Praise God I am always hungry,” answered Morano. “If I were not hungry I should starve.”

“Is it so?” said Rodriguez.

“You see,” said Morano, “the manner of it is this: my master gives me no food, and it is only when I am hungry that I dare to rob him by breaking in, as you saw me, upon his viands; were I not hungry I should not dare to do so, and so ...” He made a sad and expressive movement with both his hands suggestive of autumn leaves blown hence to die.

“He gives you no food?” said Rodriguez.

“It is the way of many men with their dog,” said Morano. “They give him no food,” and then he rubbed his hands cheerfully, “and yet the dog does not die.”

“And he gives you no wages?” said Rodriguez.

“Just these rings.”

Now Rodriguez had himself a ring upon his finger (as a gallant should), a slender piece of gold with four tiny angels holding a sapphire, and for a moment he pictured the sapphire passing into the hands of mine host and the ring of gold and the four small angels being flung to Morano; the thought darkened his gaiety for no longer than one of those fleecy clouds in Spring shadows the fields of Spain.

Morano was also looking at the ring; he had followed the young man’s glance.

“Master,” he said, “do you draw your sword of a night?”

“And you?” said Rodriguez.

“I have no sword,” said Morano. “I am but as dog’s meat that needs no guarding, but you whose meat is rare like the flesh of the unicorn need a sword to guard your meat. The unicorn has his horn always, and even then he sometimes sleeps.”

“It is bad, you think, to sleep,” Rodriguez said.

“For some it is very bad, master. They say they never take the unicorn waking. For me I am but dog’s meat: when I have eaten hams I curl up and sleep; but then you see, master, I know I shall wake in the morning.”

“Ah,” said Rodriguez, “the morning’s a pleasant time,” and he leaned back comfortably in his chair. Morano took one shrewd look at him, and was soon asleep upon his three-legged stool.

The door opened after a while and mine host appeared. “It is late,” he said. Rodriguez smiled acquiescently and mine host withdrew, and

presently leaving Morano whom his master's voice had waked, to curl up on the floor in a corner, Rodriguez took the candle that lit the room and passed once more through the passages of the inn and down the great corridor of the fastness of the family that had fallen on evil days, and so came to his chamber. I will not waste a multitude of words over that chamber; if you have no picture of it in your mind already, my reader, you are reading an unskilled writer, and if in that picture it appear a wholesome room, tidy and well kept up, if it appear a place in which a stranger might sleep without some faint foreboding of disaster, then I am wasting your time, and will waste no more of it with bits of "descriptive writing" about that dim, high room, whose blackness towered before Rodriguez in the night. He entered and shut the door, as many had done before him; but for all his youth he took some wiser precautions than had they, perhaps, who closed that door before. For first he drew his sword; then for some while he stood quite still near the door and listened to the rats; then he looked round the chamber and perceived only one door; then he looked at the heavy oak furniture, carved by some artist, gnawed by rats, and all blackened by time; then swiftly opened the door of the largest cupboard and thrust his sword in to see who might be inside, but the carved satyr's heads at the top of the cupboard eyed him silently and nothing moved. Then he noted that though there was no bolt on the door the furniture might be placed across to make what in the wars is called a barricado, but the wiser thought came at once that this was too easily done, and that if the danger that the dim room seemed gloomily to forebode were to come from a door so readily barricadoed, then those must have been simple gallants who parted so easily with the rings that adorned Morano's two little fingers. No, it was something more subtle than any attack through that door that brought his regular wages to Morano. Rodriguez looked at the window, which let in the light of a moon that was getting low, for the curtains had years ago been eaten up by the moths; but the window was barred with iron bars that were not yet rusted away, and looked out, thus guarded, over a sheer wall that even in the moonlight fell into blackness. Rodriguez then looked round for some hidden door, the sword all the while in his hand, and very soon he knew that room fairly well, but not its secret, nor why those unknown gallants had given up their rings.

It is much to know of an unknown danger that it really is unknown. Many have met their deaths through looking for danger from one particular

direction, whereas had they perceived that they were ignorant of its direction they would have been wise in their ignorance. Rodriguez had the great discretion to understand clearly that he did not know the direction from which danger would come. He accepted this as his only discovery about that portentous room which seemed to beckon to him with every shadow and to sigh over him with every mournful draught, and to whisper to him unintelligible warnings with every rustle of tattered silk that hung about his bed. And as soon as he discovered that this was his only knowledge he began at once to make his preparations: he was a right young man for the wars. He divested himself of his shoes and doublet and the light cloak that hung from his shoulder and cast the clothes on a chair. Over the back of the chair he slung his girdle and the scabbard hanging therefrom and placed his plumed hat so that none could see that his Castilian blade was not in its resting-place. And when the sombre chamber had the appearance of one having undressed in it before retiring Rodriguez turned his attention to the bed, which he noticed to be of great depth and softness. That something not unlike blood had been spilt on the floor excited no wonder in Rodriguez; that vast chamber was evidently, as I have said, in the fortress of some great family, against one of whose walls the humble inn had once leaned for protection; the great family were gone: how they were gone Rodriguez did not know, but it excited no wonder in him to see blood on the boards: besides, two gallants may have disagreed; or one who loved not dumb animals might have been killing rats. Blood did not disturb him; but what amazed him, and would have surprised anyone who stood in that ruinous room, was that there were clean new sheets on the bed. Had you seen the state of the furniture and the floor, O my reader, and the vastness of the old cobwebs and the black dust that they held, the dead spiders and huge dead flies, and the living generation of spiders descending and ascending through the gloom, I say that you also would have been surprised at the sight of those nice clean sheets. Rodriguez noted the fact and continued his preparations. He took the bolster from underneath the pillow and laid it down the middle of the bed and put the sheets back over it; then he stood back and looked at it, much as a sculptor might stand back from his marble, then he returned to it and bent it a little in the middle, and after that he placed his mandolin on the pillow and nearly covered it with the sheet, but not quite, for a little of the curved dark-brown wood remained still to be seen. It looked wonderfully now like a sleeper in the bed, but Rodriguez

was not satisfied with his work until he had placed his kerchief and one of his shoes where a shoulder ought to be; then he stood back once more and eyed it with satisfaction. Next he considered the light. He looked at the light of the moon and remembered his father's advice, as the young often do, but considered that this was not the occasion for it, and decided to leave the light of his candle instead, so that anyone who might be familiar with the moonlight in that shadowy chamber should find instead a less sinister light. He therefore dragged a table to the bedside, placed the candle upon it, and opened a treasured book that he bore in his doublet, and laid it on the bed near by, between the candle and his mandolin-headed sleeper; the name of the book was Notes in a Cathedral and dealt with the confessions of a young girl, which the author claimed to have jotted down, while concealed behind a pillow near the Confessional, every Sunday for the entire period of Lent. Lastly he pulled a sheet a little loose from the bed, until a corner of it lay on the floor; then he lay down on the boards, still keeping his sword in his hand, and by means of the sheet and some silk that hung from the bed, he concealed himself sufficient for his purpose, which was to see before he should be seen by any intruder that might enter that chamber.

And if Rodriguez appear to have been unduly suspicious, it should be borne in mind not only that those empty rings needed much explanation, but that every house suggests to the stranger something; and that whereas one house seems to promise a welcome in front of cosy fires, another good fare, another joyous wine, this inn seemed to promise murder; or so the young man's intuition said, and the young are wise to trust to their intuitions.

The reader will know, if he be one of us, who have been to the wars and slept in curious ways, that it is hard to sleep when sober upon a floor; it is not like the earth, or snow, or a feather bed; even rock can be more accommodating; it is hard, unyielding and level, all night unmistakable floor. Yet Rodriguez took no risk of falling asleep, so he said over to himself in his mind as much as he remembered of his treasured book, Notes in a Cathedral, which he always read to himself before going to rest and now so sadly missed. It told how a lady who had listened to a lover longer than her soul's safety could warrant, as he played languorous music in the moonlight and sang soft by her low balcony, and how she being truly penitent, had gathered many roses, the emblems of love (as surely, she said at confession, all the world knows), and when her lover came again by moonlight had cast them all from her from the balcony, showing that she

had renounced love; and her lover had entirely misunderstood her. It told how she often tried to show him this again, and all the misunderstandings are sweetly set forth and with true Christian penitence. Sometimes some little matter escaped Rodriguez's memory and then he longed to rise up and look at his dear book, yet he lay still where he was: and all the while he listened to the rats, and the rats went on gnawing and running regularly, scared by nothing new; Rodriguez trusted as much to their myriad ears as to his own two. The great spiders descended out of such heights that you could not see whence they came, and ascended again into blackness; it was a chamber of prodigious height. Sometimes the shadow of a descending spider that had come close to the candle assumed a frightening size, but Rodriguez gave little thought to it; it was of murder he was thinking, not of shadows; still, in its way it was ominous, and reminded Rodriguez horribly of his host; but what of an omen, again, in a chamber full of omens. The place itself was ominous; spiders could scarce make it more so. The spider itself was big enough, he thought, to be impaled on his Castilian blade; indeed, he would have done it but that he thought it wiser to stay where he was and watch. And then the spider found the candle too hot and climbed in a hurry all the way to the ceiling, and his horrible shadow grew less and dwindled away.

It was not that the rats were frightened: whatever it was that happened happened too quietly for that, but the volume of the sound of their running had suddenly increased: it was not like fear among them, for the running was no swifter, and it did not fade away; it was as though the sound of rats running, which had not been heard before, was suddenly heard now. Rodriguez looked at the door, the door was shut. A young Englishman would long ago have been afraid that he was making a fuss over nothing and would have gone to sleep in the bed, and not seen what Rodriguez saw. He might have thought that hearing more rats all at once was merely a fancy, and that everything was all right. Rodriguez saw a rope coming slowly down from the ceiling, he quickly determined whether it was a rope or only the shadow of some huge spider's thread, and then he watched it and saw it come down right over his bed and stop within a few feet of it. Rodriguez looked up cautiously to see who had sent him that strange addition to the portents that troubled the chamber, but the ceiling was too high and dim for him to perceive anything but the rope coming down out of the darkness. Yet he surmised that the ceiling must have softly opened,

without any sound at all, at the moment that he heard the greater number of rats. He waited then to see what the rope would do; and at first it hung as still as the great festoons dead spiders had made in the corners; then as he watched it it began to sway. He looked up into the dimness then to see who was swaying the rope; and for a long time, as it seemed to him lying gripping his Castilian sword on the floor he saw nothing clearly. And then he saw mine host coming down the rope, hand over hand quite nimbly, as though he lived by this business. In his right hand he held a poniard of exceptional length, yet he managed to clutch the rope and hold the poniard all the time with the same hand.

If there had been something hideous about the shadow of the spider that came down from that height the shadow of mine host was indeed demoniac. He too was like a spider, with his body at no time slender all bunched up on the rope, and his shadow was six times his size: you could turn from the spider's shadow to the spider and see that it was for the most part a fancy of the candle half crazed by the draughts, but to turn from mine host's shadow to himself and to see his wicked eyes was to say that the candle's wildest fears were true. So he climbed down his rope holding his poniard upward. But when he came within perhaps ten feet of the bed he pointed it downward and began to sway about. It will be readily seen that by swaying his rope at a height mine host could drop on any part of the bed. Rodriguez as he watched him saw him scrutinise closely and continue to sway on his rope. He feared that mine host was ill satisfied with the look of the mandolin and that he would climb away again, well warned of his guest's astuteness, into the heights of the ceiling to devise some fearfuller scheme; but he was only looking for the shoulder. And then mine host dropped; poniard first, he went down with all his weight behind it and drove it through the bolster below where the shoulder should be, just where we slant our arms across our bodies, when we lie asleep on our sides, leaving the ribs exposed: and the soft bed received him. And the moment that mine host let go of his rope Rodriguez leaped to his feet. He saw Rodriguez, indeed their eyes met as he dropped through the air, but what could mine host do? He was already committed to his stroke, and his poniard was already deep in the mattress when the good Castilian blade passed through his ribs.

THE SECOND CHRONICLE

HOW HE HIRED A MEMORABLE SERVANT

When Rodriguez woke, the birds were singing gloriously. The sun was up and the air was sparkling over Spain. The gloom had left his high chamber, and much of the menace had gone from it that overnight had seemed to bode in the corners. It had not become suddenly tidy; it was still more suitable for spiders than men, it still mourned and brooded over the great family that it had nursed and that evil days had so obviously overtaken; but it no longer had the air of finger to lips, no longer seemed to share a secret with you, and that secret Murder. The rats still ran round the wainscot, but the song of the birds and the jolly, dazzling sunshine were so much larger than the sombre room that the young man's thoughts escaped from it and ran free to the fields. It may have been only his fancy but the world seemed somehow brighter for the demise of mine host of the Dragon and Knight, whose body still lay hunched up on the foot of his bed. Rodriguez jumped up and went to the high, barred window and looked out of it at the morning: far below him a little town with red roofs lay; the smoke came up from the chimneys toward him slowly, and spread out flat and did not reach so high. Between him and the roofs swallows were sailing.

He found water for washing in a cracked pitcher of earthenware and as he dressed he looked up at the ceiling and admired mine host's device, for there was an open hole that had come noiselessly, without any sounds of bolts or lifting of trap-doors, but seemed to have opened out all round on perfectly oiled grooves, to fit that well-to-do body, and down from the middle of it from some higher beam hung the rope down which mine host had made his last journey.

Before taking leave of his host Rodriguez looked at his poniard, which was a good two feet in length, not counting the hilt, and was surprised to find it an excellent blade. It bore a design on the steel representing a town, which Rodriguez recognised for the towers of Toledo; and had held moreover a jewel at the end of the hilt, but the little gold socket was empty. Rodriguez therefore perceived that the poniard was that of a gallant, and surmised that mine host had begun his trade with a butcher's knife, but having come by the poniard had found it to be handier for his business.

Rodriguez being now fully dressed, girt his own blade about him, and putting the poniard under his cloak, for he thought to find a use for it at the wars, set his plumed hat upon him and jauntily stepped from the chamber. By the light of day he saw clearly at what point the passages of the inn had dared to make their intrusion on the corridors of the fortress, for he walked for four paces between walls of huge grey rocks which had never been plastered and were clearly a breach in the fortress, though whether the breach were made by one of the evil days that had come upon the family in their fastness, and whether men had poured through it with torches and swords, or whether the gap had been cut in later years for mine host of the Dragon and Knight, and he had gone quietly through it rubbing his hands, nothing remained to show Rodriguez now.

When he came to the dining-chamber he found Morano astir. Morano looked up from his overwhelming task of tidying the Inn of the Dragon and Knight and then went on with his pretended work, for he felt a little ashamed of the knowledge he had concerning the ways of that inn, which was more than an honest man should know about such a place.

"Good morning, Morano," said Rodriguez blithely.

"Good morning," answered the servant of the Dragon and Knight.

"I am looking for the wars. Would you like a new master, Morano?"

"Indeed," said Morano, "a good master is better to some men's minds than a bad one. Yet, you see señor, my bad master has me bound never to leave him, by oaths that I do not properly understand the meaning of, and that might blast me in any world were I to forswear them. He hath bound me by San Sathanas, with many others. I do not like the sound of that San Sathanas. And so you see, señor, my bad master suits me better than perhaps to be whithered in this world by a levin-stroke, and in the next world who knows?"

"Morano," said Rodriguez, "there is a dead spider on my bed."

"A dead spider, master?" said Morano, with as much concern in his voice as though no spider had ever sullied that chamber before.

"Yes," said Rodriguez, "I shall require you to keep my bed tidy on our way to the wars."

"Master," said Morano, "no spider shall come near it, living or dead."

And so our company of one going northward through Spain looking for romance became a company of two.

“Master,” said Morano, “as I do not see him whom I serve, and his ways are early ways, I fear some evil has overtaken him, whereby we shall be suspect, for none other dwells here: and he is under special protection of the Garda Civil; it would be well therefore to start for the wars right early.”

“The guard protect mine host then.” Rodriguez said with as much surprise in his tones as he ever permitted himself.

“Master,” Morano said, “it could not be otherwise. For so many gallants have entered the door of this inn and supped in this chamber and never been seen again, and so many suspicious things have been found here, such as blood, that it became necessary for him to pay the guard well, and so they protect him.” And Morano hastily slung over his shoulder by leather straps an iron pot and a frying-pan and took his broad felt hat from a peg on the wall.

Rodriguez’ eyes looked so curiously at the great cooking utensils dangling there from the straps that Morano perceived his young master did not fully understand these preparations: he therefore instructed him thus: “Master, there be two things necessary in the wars, strategy and cooking. Now the first of these comes in use when the captains speak of their achievements and the historians write of the wars. Strategy is a learned thing, master, and the wars may not be told of without it, but while the war rageth and men be camped upon the foughten field then is the time for cooking; for many a man that fights the wars, if he hath not his food, were well content to let the enemy live, but feed him and at once he becometh proud at heart and cannot a-bear the sight of the enemy walking among his tents but must needs slay him outright. Aye, master, the cooking for the wars; and when the wars are over you who are learned shall study strategy.”

And Rodriguez perceived that there was wisdom in the world that was not taught in the College of San Josephus, near to his father’s valleys, where he had learned in his youth the ways of books.

“Morano,” he said, “let us now leave mine host to entertain la Garda.”

And at the mention of the guard hurry came on Morano, he closed his lips upon his store of wisdom, and together they left the Inn of the Dragon and Knight. And when Rodriguez saw shut behind him that dark door of oak that he had so persistently entered, and through which he had come again to the light of the sun by many precautions and some luck, he felt gratitude to Morano. For had it not been for Morano’s sinister hints, and above all his remark that mine host would have driven him thence because

he liked him, the evil look of the sombre chamber alone might not have been enough to persuade him to the precautions that cut short the dreadful business of that inn. And with his gratitude was a feeling not unlike remorse, for he felt that he had deprived this poor man of a part of his regular wages, which would have been his own gold ring and the setting that held the sapphire, had all gone well with the business. So he slipped the ring from his finger and gave it to Morano, sapphire and all.

Morano's expressions of gratitude were in keeping with that flowery period in Spain, and might appear ridiculous were I to expose them to the eyes of an age in which one in Morano's place on such an occasion would have merely said, "Damned good of you old nut, not half," and let the matter drop.

I merely record therefore that Morano was grateful and so expressed himself; while Rodriguez, in addition to the pleasant glow in the mind that comes from a generous action, had another feeling that gives all of us pleasure, or comfort at least (until it grows monotonous), a feeling of increased safety; for while he had the ring upon his finger and Morano went unpaid the thought could not help occurring, even to a generous mind, that one of these windy nights Morano might come for his wages.

"Master," said Morano looking at the sapphire now on his own little finger near the top joint, the only stone amongst his row of rings, "you must surely have great wealth."

"Yes," said Rodriguez slapping the scabbard that held his Castilian blade. And when he saw that Morano's eyes were staring at the little emeralds that were dotted along the velvet of the scabbard he explained that it was the sword that was his wealth:

"For in the wars," he said, "are all things to be won, and nothing is unobtainable to the sword. For parchment and custom govern all the possessions of man, as they taught me in the College of San Josephus. Yet the sword is at first the founder and discoverer of all possessions; and this my father told me before he gave me this sword, which hath already acquired in the old time fair castles with many a tower."

"And those that dwelt in the castles, master, before the sword came?" said Morano.

"They died and went dismally to Hell," said Rodriguez, "as the old songs say."

They walked on then in silence. Morano, with his low forehead and greater girth of body than of brain to the superficial observer, was not incapable of thought. However slow his thoughts may have come, Morano was pondering surely. Suddenly the puckers on his little forehead cleared and he brightly looked at Rodriguez as they went on side by side.

"Master," Morano said, "when you choose a castle in the wars, let it above all things be one of those that is easy to be defended; for castles are easily got, as the old songs tell, and in the heat of combat positions are quickly stormed, and no more ado; but, when wars are over, then is the time for ease and languorous days and the imperilling of the soul, though not beyond the point where our good fathers may save it."

"Nay, Morano," Rodriguez said, "no man, as they taught me well in the College of San Josephus, should ever imperil his soul."

"But, master," Morano said, "a man imperils his body in the wars yet hopes by dexterity and his sword to draw it safely thence: so a man of courage and high heart may surely imperil his soul and still hope to bring it at the last to salvation."

"Not so," said Rodriguez, and gave his mind to pondering upon the exact teaching he had received on this very point, but could not clearly remember.

So they walked in silence, Rodriguez thinking still of this spiritual problem, Morano turning, though with infinite slowness, to another thought upon a lower plane.

And after a while Rodriguez' eyes turned again to the flowers, and he felt his meditation, as youth will, and looking abroad he saw the wonder of Spring calling forth the beauty of Spain, and he lifted up his head and his heart rejoiced with the anemones, as hearts at his age do: but Morano clung to his thought.

It was long before Rodriguez' fanciful thoughts came back from among the flowers, for among those delicate earliest blooms of Spring his youthful visions felt they were with familiars; so they tarried, neglecting the dusty road and poor gross Morano. But when his fancies left the flowers at last and looked again at Morano, Rodriguez perceived that his servant was all troubled with thought: so he left Morano in silence for his thought to come to maturity, for he had formed a liking already for the judgments of Morano's simple mind.

They walked in silence for the space of an hour, and at last Morano spoke. It was then noon. "Master," he said, "at this hour it is the custom of

la Garda to enter the Inn of the Dragon and to dine at the expense of mine host."

"A merry custom," said Rodriguez.

"Master," said Morano, "if they find him in less than his usual health they will get their dinners for themselves in the larder and dine and afterwards sleep. But after that; master, after that, should anything inauspicious have befallen mine host, they will seek out and ask many questions concerning all travellers, too many for our liking."

"We are many good miles from the Inn of the Dragon and Knight," said Rodriguez.

"Master, when they have eaten and slept and asked questions they will follow on horses," said Morano.

"We can hide," said Rodriguez, and he looked round over the plain, very full of flowers, but empty and bare under the blue sky of any place in which a man might hide to escape from pursuers on horse back. He perceived then that he had no plan.

"Master," said Morano, "there is no hiding like disguises."

Once more Rodriguez looked round him over the plain, seeing no houses, no men; and his opinion of Morano's judgment sank when he said disguises. But then Morano unfolded to him that plan which up to that day had never been tried before, so far as records tell, in all the straits in which fugitive men have been; and which seems from my researches in verse and prose never to have been attempted since.

The plan was this, astute as Morano, and simple as his naive mind. The clothing for which Rodriguez searched the plain vainly was ready to hand. No disguise was effective against la Garda, they had too many suspicions, their skill was to discover disguises. But in the moment of la Garda's triumph, when they had found out the disguise, when success had lulled the suspicions for which they were infamous, then was the time to trick la Garda. Rodriguez wondered; but the slow mind of Morano was sure, and now he came to the point, the fruit of his hour's thinking. Rodriguez should disguise himself as Morano. When la Garda discovered that he was not the man he appeared to be, a study to which they devoted their lives, their suspicions would rest and there would be an end of it. And Morano should disguise himself as Rodriguez.

It was a new idea. Had Rodriguez been twice his age he would have discarded it at once; for age is guided by precedent which, when pursued, is

a dangerous guide indeed. Even as it was he was critical, for the novelty of the thing coming thus from his gross servant surprised him as much as though Morano had uttered poetry of his own when he sang, as he sometimes did, certain merry lascivious songs of Spain that any one of the last few centuries knew as well as any of the others.

And would not la Garda find out that he was himself, Rodriguez asked, as quickly as they found out he was not Morano.

"That," said Morano, "is not the way of la Garda. For once let la Garda come by a suspicion, such as that you, master, are but Morano, and they will cling to it even to the last, and not abandon it until they needs must, and then throw it away as it were in disgust and ride hence at once, for they like not tarrying long near one who has seen them mistaken."

"They will soon then come by another suspicion," said Rodriguez.

"Not so, master," answered Morano, "for those that are as suspicious as la Garda change their suspicions but slowly. A suspicion is an old song to them."

"Then," said Rodriguez, "I shall be hard set ever to show that I am not you if they ever suspect I am."

"It will be hard, master," Morano answered; "but we shall do it, for we shall have truth upon our side."

"How shall we disguise ourselves?" said Rodriguez.

"Master," said Morano, "when you came to our town none knew you and all marked your clothes. As for me my fat body is better known than my clothes, yet am I not too well known by la Garda, for, being an honest man, whenever la Garda came I used to hide."

"You did well," said Rodriguez.

"Certainly I did well," said Morano, "for had they seen me they might, on account of certain matters, have taken me to prison, and prison is no place for an honest man."

"Let us disguise ourselves," said Rodriguez.

"Master," answered Morano, "the brain is greater than the stomach, and now more than at any time we need the counsel of the brain; let us therefore appease the clamours of the stomach that it be silent."

And he drew out from amongst his clothing a piece of sacking in which was a mass of bacon and some lard, and unslung his huge frying-pan. Rodriguez had entirely forgotten the need of food, but now the memory of it had rushed upon him like a flood over a barrier, as soon as he saw the

bacon. And when they had collected enough of tiny inflammable things, for it was a treeless plain, and Morano had made a fire, and the odour of the bacon became perceptible, this memory was hugely intensified.

"Let us eat while they eat, master," said Morano, "and plan while they sleep, and disguise ourselves while they pursue."

And this they did: for after they had eaten they dug up earth and gathered leaves with which to fill the gaps in Morano's garments when they should hang on Rodriguez, they plucked a geranium with whose dye they deepened Rodriguez' complexion, and with the sap from the stalk of a weed Morano toned to a pallor the ruddy brown of his tough cheeks. Then they changed clothes altogether, which made Morano gasp: and after that nothing remained but to cut off the delicate black moustachios of Rodriguez and to stick them to the face of Morano with the juice of another flower that he knew where to find. Rodriguez sighed when he saw them go. He had pictured ecstatic glances cast some day at those moustachios, glances from under long eyelashes twinkling at evening from balconies; and looking at them where they were now, he felt that this was impossible.

For one moment Morano raised his head with an air, as it were preening himself, when the new moustachios had stuck; but as soon as he saw, or felt, his master's sorrow at their loss he immediately hung his head, showing nothing but shame for the loss he had caused his master, or for the impropriety of those delicate growths that so ill become his jowl. And now they took the road again, Rodriguez with the great frying-pan and cooking-pot; no longer together, but not too far apart for la Garda to take them both at once, and to make the doubly false charge that should so confound their errand. And Morano wore that old triumphant sword, and carried the mandolin that was ever young.

They had not gone far when it was as Morano had said; for, looking back, as they often did, to the spot where their road touched the sky-line, they saw la Garda spurring, seven of them in their unmistakable looped hats, very clear against the sky which a moment ago seemed so fair.

When the seven saw the two they did not spare the dust; and first they came to Morano.

"You," they said, "are Rodriguez Trinidad Fernandez, Concepcion Henrique Maria, a Lord of the Valleys of Arguento Harez."

"No, masters," said Morano.

Oh but denials were lost upon la Garda.

Denials inflamed their suspicions as no other evidence could. Many a man had they seen with his throat in the hands of the public garrotter; and all had begun with denials who ended thus. They looked at the mandolin, at the gay cloak, at the emeralds in the scabbard, for wherever emeralds go there is evidence to identify them, until the nature of man changes or the price of emeralds. They spoke hastily among themselves.

"Without doubt," said one of them, "you are whom we said." And they arrested Morano.

Then they spurred on to Rodriguez. "You are," they said, "as no man doubts, one Morano, servant at the Inn of the Dragon and Knight, whose good master is, as we allege, dead."

"Masters," answered Rodriguez, "I am but a poor traveller, and no servant at any inn."

Now la Garda, as I have indicated, will hear all things except denials; and thus to receive two within the space of two moments infuriated them so fiercely that they were incapable of forming any other theory that day except the one they held.

There are many men like this; they can form a plausible theory and grasp its logical points, but take it away from them and destroy it utterly before their eyes, and they will not so easily lash their tired brains at once to build another theory in place of the one that is ruined.

"As the saints live," they said, "you are Morano." And they arrested Rodriguez too.

Now when they began to turn back by the way they had come Rodriguez began to fear overmuch identification, so he assured la Garda that in the next village ahead of them were those who would answer all questions concerning him, as well as being the possessors of the finest vintage of wine in the kingdom of Spain.

Now it may be that the mention of this wine soothed the anger caused in the men of la Garda by two denials, or it may be that curiosity guided them, at any rate they took the road that led away from last night's sinister shelter, Rodriguez and five of la Garda. Two of them stayed behind with Morano, undecided as yet which way to take, though looking wistfully the way that that wine was said to be; and Rodriguez left Morano to his own devices, in which he trusted profoundly.

Now Rodriguez knew not the name of the next village that they would come to nor the names of any of the dwellers in it.

Yet he had a plan. As he went by the side of one of the horses he questioned the rider.

"Can Morano write?" he said. La Garda laughed.

"Can Morano talk Latin?" he said. La Garda crossed themselves, all five men. And after some while of riding, and hard walking for Rodriguez, to whom they allowed a hand on a stirrup leather, there came in sight the tops of the brown roofs of a village over a fold of the plain. "Is this your village?" said one of his captors.

"Surely," answered Rodriguez.

"What is its name?" said one.

"It has many names," said Rodriguez.

And then another one of them recognised it from the shape of its roofs. "It is Saint Judas-not-Iscariot," he said.

"Aye, so strangers call it," said Rodriguez.

And where the road turned round that fold of the plain, lolling a little to its left in the idle Spanish air, they came upon the village all in view. I do not know how to describe this village to you, my reader, for the words that mean to you what it was are all the wrong words to use. "Antique," "old-world," "quaint," seem words with which to tell of it. Yet it had no antiquity denied to the other villages; it had been brought to birth like them by the passing of time, and was nursed like them in the lap of plains or valleys of Spain. Nor was it quainter than any of its neighbours, though it was like itself alone, as they had their characters also; and, though no village in the world was like it, it differed only from the next as sister differs from sister. To those that dwelt in it, it was wholly apart from all the world of man.

Most of its tall white houses with green doors were gathered about the market-place, in which were pigeons and smells and declining sunlight, as Rodriguez and his escort came towards it, and from round a corner at the back of it the short, repeated song of one who would sell a commodity went up piercingly.

This was all very long ago. Time has wrecked that village now. Centuries have flowed over it, some stormily, some smoothly, but so many that, of the village Rodriguez saw, there can be now no more than wreckage. For all I know a village of that name may stand on that same plain, but the Saint Judas-not-Iscariot that Rodriguez knew is gone like youth.

Queerly tiled, sheltered by small dense trees, and standing a little apart, Rodriguez recognised the house of the Priest. He recognised it by a certain

air it had. Thither he pointed and la Garda rode. Again he spoke to them. “Can Morano speak Latin?” he said.

“God forbid!” said la Garda.

They dismounted and opened a gate that was gilded all over, in a low wall of round boulders. They went up a narrow path between thick ilices and came to the green door. They pulled a bell whose handle was a symbol carved in copper, one of the Priest’s mysteries. The bell boomed through the house, a tiny musical boom, and the Priest opened the door; and Rodriguez addressed him in Latin. And the Priest answered him.

At first la Garda had not realised what had happened. And then the Priest beckoned and they all entered his house, for Rodriguez had asked him for ink. Into a room they came where a silver ink-pot was, and the grey plume of the goose. Picture no such ink-pot, my reader, as they sell to-day in shops, the silver no thicker than paper, and perhaps a pattern all over it guaranteed artistic. It was molten silver well wrought, and hollowed for ink. And in the hollow there was the magical fluid, the stuff that rules the world and hinders time; that in which flows the will of a king, to establish his laws for ever; that which gives valleys unto new possessors; that whereby towers are held by their lawful owners; that which, used grimly by the King’s judge, is death; that which, when poets play, is mirth for ever and ever.

No wonder la Garda looked at it in awe, no wonder they crossed themselves again: and then Rodriguez wrote. In the silence that followed the jaws of la Garda dropped, while the old Priest slightly smiled, for he somewhat divined the situation already; and, being the people’s friend, he loved not la Garda more than he was bound by the rules of his duty to man.

Then one of la Garda spoke, bringing back his confidence with a bluster. “Morano has sold his soul to Satan,” he said, “in exchange for Satan’s aid, and Satan has taught his tongue Latin and guides his fingers in the affairs of the pen.” And so said all la Garda, rejoicing at finding an explanation where a moment ago there was none, as all men at such times do: little it matters what the explanation be: does a man in Sahara, who finds water suddenly, inquire with precision what its qualities are?

And then the Priest said a word and made a sign, against which Satan himself can only prevail with difficulty, and in presence of which his spells can never endure. And after this Rodriguez wrote again. Then were la Garda silent.

And at length the leader said, and he called on them all to testify, that he had made no charge whatever against this traveller; moreover, they had escorted him on his way out of respect for him, because the roads were dangerous, and must now depart because they had higher duties. So la Garda departed, looking before them with stern, preoccupied faces and urging their horses on, as men who go on an errand of great urgency. And Rodriguez, having thanked them for their protection upon the road, turned back into the house and the two sat down together, and Rodriguez told his rescuer the story of the hospitality of the Inn of the Dragon and Knight.

Not as confession he told it, but as a pleasant tale, for he looked on the swift demise of la Garda's friend, in the night, in the spidery room, as a fair blessing for Spain, a thing most suited to the sweet days of Spring. The spiritual man rejoiced to hear such a tale, as do all men of peace to hear talk of violent deeds in which they may not share. And when the tale was ended he reproved Rodriguez exceedingly, explaining to him the nature of the sin of blood, and telling him that absolution could be come by now, though hardly, but how on some future occasion there might be none to be had. And Rodriguez listened with all the gravity of expression that youth knows well how to wear while its thoughts are nimbly dancing far away in fair fields of adventure or love.

And darkness came down and lamps were carried in: and the reverend father asked Rodriguez in what other affairs of violence his sword had unhappily been. And Rodriguez knew well the history of that sword, having gathered all that concerned it out of spoken legend or song. And although the reverend man frowned minatorily whenever he heard of its passings through the ribs of the faithful, and nodded as though his head gave benediction when he heard of the destruction of God's most vile enemy the infidel, and though he gasped a little through his lips when he heard of certain tarryings of that sword, in scented gardens, while Christian knights should sleep and their swords hang on the wall, though sometimes even a little he raised his hands, yet he leaned forward always, listening well, and picturing clearly as though his gleaming eyes could see them, each doleful tale of violence or sin. And so night came, and began to wear away, and neither knew how late the hour was. And then as Rodriguez spoke of an evening in a garden, of which some old song told well, a night in early summer under the evening star, and that sword there as always; as he told of his grandfather as poets had loved to tell, going among the scents of the

huge flowers, familiar with the dark garden as the moths that drifted by him; as he spoke of a sigh heard faintly, as he spoke of danger near, whether to body or soul; as the reverend father was about to raise both his hands; there came a thunder of knockings upon the locked green door.

THE THIRD CHRONICLE

HOW HE CAME TO THE HOUSE OF WONDER

It was the gross Morano. Here he had tracked Rodriguez, for where la Garda goes is always known, and rumour of it remains long behind them, like the scent of a fox. He told no tale of his escape more than a dog does who comes home some hours late; a dog comes back to his master, that is all, panting a little perhaps; someone perhaps had caught him and he escaped and came home, a thing too natural to attempt to speak of by any of the signs that a dog knows.

Part of Morano's method seems to have resembled Rodriguez', for just as Rodriguez spoke Latin, so Morano fell back upon his own natural speech, that he as it were unbridled and allowed to run free, the coarseness of which had at first astounded, and then delighted, la Garda.

"And did they not suspect that you were yourself?" said Rodriguez.

"No, master," Morano answered, "for I said that I was the brother of the King of Aragon."

"The King of Aragon!" Rodriguez said, going to the length of showing surprise. "Yes, indeed, master." said Morano, "and they recognised me."

"Recognised you!" exclaimed the Priest.

"Indeed so," said Morano, "for they said that they were themselves the Kings of Aragon; and so, father, they recognised me for their brother."

"That you should not have said," the Priest told Morano.

"Reverend father," replied Morano, "as Heaven shines, I believed that what I said was true." And Morano sighed deeply. "And now," he said, "I know it is true no more."

Whether he sighed for the loss of his belief in that exalted relationship, or whether for the loss of that state of mind in which such beliefs come easily, there was nothing in his sigh to show. They questioned him further, but he said no more: he was here, there was no more to say: he was here and la Garda was gone.

And then the reverend man brought for them a great supper, even at that late hour, for many an hour had slipped softly by as he heard the sins of the sword; and wine he set out, too, of a certain golden vintage, long lost — I fear — my reader: but this he gave not to Morano lest he should be once

more, what the reverend father feared to entertain, that dread hidalgo, the King of Aragon's brother. And after that, the stars having then gone far on their ways, the old Priest rose and offered a bed to Rodriguez; and even as he eyed Morano, wondering where to put him, and was about to speak, for he had no other bed, Morano went to a corner of the room and curled up and lay down. And by the time his host had walked over to him and spoken, asking anxiously if he needed nothing more, he was almost already asleep, and muttered in answer, after having been spoken to twice, no more than "Straw, reverend father, straw."

An armful of this the good man brought him, and then showed Rodriguez to his room; and they can scarcely have reached it before Morano was back in Aragon again, walking on golden shoes (which were sometimes wings), proud among lesser princes.

As precaution for the night Rodriguez took one more glance at his host's kind face; and then, with sword out of reach and an unlocked door, he slept till the songs of birds out of the deeps of the ilices made sleep any longer impossible.

The third morning of Rodriguez' wandering blazed over Spain like brass; flowers and grass and sky were twinkling all together.

When Rodriguez greeted his host Morano was long astir, having awakened with dawn, for the simpler and humbler the creature the nearer it is akin to the earth and the sun. The forces that woke the birds and opened the flowers stirred the gross lump of Morano, ending his sleep as they ended the nightingale's song.

They breakfasted hurriedly and Rodriguez rose to depart, feeling that he had taken hospitality that had not been offered. But against his departure was the barrier of all the politeness of Spain. The house was his, said his host, and even the small grove of ilices.

If I told you half of the things that the reverend man said, you would say: "This writer is affected. I do not like all this flowery mush." I think it safer, my reader, not to tell you any of it. Let us suppose that he merely said, "Quite all right," and that when Rodriguez thanked him on one knee he answered, "Not at all;" and that so Rodriguez and Morano left. If here it miss some flash of the fair form of Truth it is the fault of the age I write for.

The road again, dust again, birds and the blaze of leaves, these were the background of my wanderers, until the eye had gone as far as the eye can

roam, and there were the tips of some far pale-blue mountains that now came into view.

They were still in each other's clothes; but the village was not behind them very far when Morano explained, for he knew the ways of la Garda, that having arrested two men upon this road, they would now arrest two men each on all the other roads, in order to show the impartiality of the Law, which constantly needs to be exhibited; and that therefore all men were safe on the road they were on for a long while to come.

Now there seemed to Rodriguez to be much good sense in what Morano had said; and so indeed there was for they had good laws in Spain, and they differed little, though so long ago, from our own excellent system. Therefore they changed once more, giving back to each other everything but, alas, those delicate black moustachios; and these to Rodriguez seemed gone for ever, for the growth of new ones seemed so far ahead to the long days of youth that his hopes could scarce reach to them.

When Morano found himself once more in those clothes that had been with him night and day for so many years he seemed to expand; I mean no metaphor here; he grew visibly fatter.

"Ah," said Morano after a huge breath, "last night I dreamed, in your illustrious clothes, that I was in lofty station. And now, master, I am comfortable."

"Which were best, think you," said Rodriguez, "if you could have but one, a lofty place or comfort?" Even in those days such a question was trite, but Rodriguez uttered it only thinking to dip in the store of Morano's simple wisdom, as one may throw a mere worm to catch a worthy fish. But in this he was disappointed; for Morano made no neat comparison nor even gave an opinion, saying only, "Master, while I have comfort how shall I judge the case of any who have not?" And no more would he say. His new found comfort, lost for a day and night, seemed so to have soothed his body that it closed the gates of the mind, as too much luxury may, even with poets.

And now Rodriguez thought of his quest again, and the two of them pushed on briskly to find the wars.

For an hour they walked in silence an empty road. And then they came upon a row of donkeys; piled high with the bark of the cork-tree, that men were bringing slowly from far woods. Some of the men were singing as they went. They passed slow in the sunshine.

“Oh, master,” said Morano when they were gone, “I like not that lascivious loitering.”

“Why, Morano?” said Rodriguez. “It was not God that made hurry.”

“Master,” answered Morano, “I know well who made hurry. And may he not overtake my soul at the last. Yet it is bad for our fortunes that these men should loiter thus. You want your castle, master; and I, I want not always to wander roads, with la Garda perhaps behind and no certain place to curl up and sleep in front. I look for a heap of straw in the cellar of your great castle.”

“Yes, yes, you shall have it,” his master said, “but how do these folks hinder you?” For Morano was scowling at them over his shoulder in a way that was somehow spoiling the gladness of Spring.

“The air is full of their singing,” Morano said. “It is as though their souls were already flying to Hell, and cawing hoarse with sin all the way as they go. And they loiter, and they linger...” Oh, but Morano was angry.

“But,” said Rodriguez, “how does their lingering harm you?”

“Where are the wars, master? Where are the wars?” blurted Morano, his round face turning redder. “The donkeys would be dead, the men would be running, there would be shouts, cries, and confusion, if the wars were anywhere near. There would be all things but this.”

The men strolled on singing and so passed slow into distance. Morano was right, though I know not how he knew.

And now the men and the donkeys were nearly out of sight, but had not yet at all emerged from the wrath of Morano. “Lascivious knaves,” muttered that disappointed man. And whenever he faintly heard dim snatches of their far song that a breeze here, and another there, brought over the plain as it ran on the errands of Spring, he cursed their sins under his breath. Though it seemed not so much their sins that moved his wrath as the leisure they had for committing them.

“Peace, peace, Morano,” said Rodriguez.

“It is that,” said Morano, “that is troubling me.”

“What?”

“This same peace.”

“Morano,” said Rodriguez, “I had when young to study the affairs of men; and this is put into books, and so they make history. Now I learned that there is no thing in which men have taken delight, that is ever put away from them; for it seems that time, which altereth every custom, hath altered

none of our likings: and in every chapter they taught me there were these wars to be found."

"Master, the times are altered," said Morano sadly. "It is not now as in old days."

And this was not the wisdom of Morano, for anger had clouded his judgment. And a faint song came yet from the donkey-drivers, wavering over the flowers.

"Master," Morano said, "there are men like those vile sin-mongers, who have taken delight in peace. It may be that peace has been brought upon the world by one of these lousy likings."

"The delight of peace," said Rodriguez, "is in its contrast to war. If war were banished this delight were gone. And man lost none of his delights in any chapter I read."

The word and the meaning of CONTRAST were such as is understood by reflective minds, the product of education. Morano felt rather than reflected; and the word CONTRAST meant nothing to him. This ended their conversation. And the songs of the donkey-drivers, light though they were, being too heavy to be carried farther by the idle air of Spring, Morano ceased cursing their sins.

And now the mountains rose up taller, seeming to stretch themselves and raise their heads. In a while they seemed to be peering over the plain. They that were as pale ghosts, far off, dim like Fate, in the early part of the morning, now appeared darker, more furrowed, more sinister, more careworn; more immediately concerned with the affairs of Earth, and so more menacing to earthly things.

Still they went on and still the mountains grew. And noon came, when Spain sleeps.

And now the plain was altering, as though cool winds from the mountains brought other growths to birth, so that they met with bushes straggling wild; free, careless and mysterious, as they do, where there is none to teach great Nature how to be tidy.

The wanderers chose a clump of these that were gathered near the way, like gypsies camped awhile midway on a wonderful journey, who at dawn will rise and go, leaving but a bare trace of their resting and no guess of their destiny; so fairy-like, so free, so phantasmal those dark shrubs seemed.

Morano lay down on the very edge of the shade of one, and Rodriguez lay fair in the midst of the shade of another, whereby anyone passing that

way would have known which was the older traveller. Morano, according to his custom, was asleep almost immediately; but Rodriguez, with wonder and speculation each toying with novelty and pulling it different ways between them, stayed awhile wakeful. Then he too slept, and a bird thought it safe to return to an azalea of its own; which it lately fled from troubled by the arrival of these two.

And Rodriguez the last to sleep was the first awake, for the shade of the shrub left him, and he awoke in the blaze of the sun to see Morano still sheltered, well in the middle now of the shadow he chose. The gross sleep of Morano I will not describe to you, reader. I have chosen a pleasant tale for you in a happy land, in the fairest time of year, in a golden age: I have youth to show you and an ancient sword, birds, flowers and sunlight, in a plain unharmed by any dream of commerce: why should I show you the sleep of that inelegant man whose bulk lay cumbering the earth like a low, unseemly mountain?

Rodriguez overtook the shade he had lost and lay there resting until Morano awoke, driven all at once from sleep by a dream or by mere choking. Then from the intricacies of his clothing, which to him after those two days was what home is to some far wanderer, Morano drew out once more a lump of bacon. Then came the fry-pan and then a fire: it was the Wanderers' Mess. That mess-room has stood in many lands and has only one roof. We are proud of that roof, all we who belong to that Mess. We boast of it when we show it to our friends when it is all set out at night. It has Aldebaran in it, the Bear and Orion, and at the other end the Southern Cross. Yes we are proud of our roof when it is at its best.

What am I saying? I should be talking of bacon. Yes, but there is a way of cooking it in our Mess that I want to tell you and cannot. I've tasted bacon there that isn't the same as what you get at the Ritz. And I want to tell you how that bacon tastes; and I can't so I talk about stars. But perhaps you are one of us, reader, and then you will understand. Only why the hell don't we get back there again where the Evening Star swings low on the wall of the Mess?

When they rose from table, when they got up from the earth, and the frying-pan was slung on Morano's back, adding grease to the mere surface of his coat whose texture could hold no more, they pushed on briskly for they saw no sign of houses, unless what Rodriguez saw now dimly above a ravine were indeed a house in the mountains.

They had walked from eight till noon without any loitering. They must have done fifteen miles since the mountains were pale blue. And now, every mile they went, on the most awful of the dark ridges the object Rodriguez saw seemed more and more like a house. Yet neither then, nor as they drew still nearer, nor when they saw it close, nor looking back on it after years, did it somehow seem quite right. And Morano sometimes crossed himself as he looked at it, and said nothing.

Rodriguez, as they walked ceaselessly through the afternoon, seeing his servant show some sign of weariness, which comes not to youth, pointed out the house looking nearer than it really was on the mountain, and told him that he should find there straw, and they would sup and stay the night. Afterwards, when the strange appearance of the house, varying with different angles, filled him with curious forebodings, Rodriguez would make no admission to his servant, but held to the plan he had announced, and so approached the queer roofs, neglecting the friendly stars.

Through the afternoon the two travellers pushed on mostly in silence, for the glances that house seemed to give him from the edge of its perilous ridge, had driven the mirth from Rodriguez and had even checked the garrulity on the lips of the tougher Morano, if garrulity can be ascribed to him whose words seldom welled up unless some simple philosophy troubled his deeps. The house seemed indeed to glance at him, for as their road wound on, the house showed different aspects, different walls and edges of walls, and different curious roofs; all these walls seemed to peer at him. One after another they peered, new ones glided imperceptibly into sight as though to say, We see too.

The mountains were not before them but a little to the right of their path, until new ones appeared ahead of them like giants arising from sleep, and then their path seemed blocked as though by a mighty wall against which its feeble wanderings went in vain. In the end it turned a bit to its right and went straight for a dark mountain, where a wild track seemed to come down out of the rocks to meet it, and upon this track looked down that sinister house. Had you been there, my reader, you would have said, any of us had said, Why not choose some other house? There were no other houses. He who dwelt on the edge of the ravine that ran into that dark mountain was wholly without neighbours.

And evening came, and still they were far from the mountain.

The sun set on their left. But it was in the eastern sky that the greater splendour was; for the low rays streaming across lit up some stormy clouds that were brooding behind the mountain and turned their gloomy forms to an astounding purple.

And after this their road began to rise toward the ridges. The mountains darkened and the sinister house was about to merge with their shadows, when he who dwelt there lit candles.

The act astonished the wayfarers. All through half the day they had seen the house, until it seemed part of the mountains; evil it seemed like their ridges, that were black and bleak and forbidding, and strange it seemed with a strangeness that moved no fears they could name, yet it seemed inactive as night.

Now lights appeared showing that someone moved. Window after window showed to the bare dark mountain its gleaming yellow glare; there in the night the house forsook the dark rocks that seemed kin to it, by glowing as they could never glow, by doing what the beasts that haunted them could not do: this was the lair of man. Here was the light of flame but the rocks remained dark and cold as the wind of night that went over them, he who dwelt now with the lights had forsaken the rocks, his neighbours.

And, when all were lit, one light high in a tower shone green. These lights appearing out of the mountain thus seemed to speak to Rodriguez and to tell him nothing. And Morano wondered, as he seldom troubled to do.

They pushed on up the steepening path.

"Like you the looks of it?" said Rodriguez once.

"Aye, master," answered Morano, "so there be straw."

"You see nothing strange there, then?" Rodriguez said.

"Master," Morano said, "there be saints for all requirements."

Any fears he had felt about that house before, now as he neared it were gone; it was time to put away fears and face the event; thus worked Morano's philosophy. And he turned his thoughts to the achievements upon earth of a certain Saint who met Satan, and showed to the sovereign of Hell a discourtesy alien to the ways of the Church.

It was dark now, and the yellow lights got larger as they drew nearer the windows, till they saw large shadows obscurely passing from room to room. The ascent was steep now and the pathway stopped. No track of any kind approached the house. It stood on a precipice-edge as though one of the

rocks of the mountain: they climbed over rocks to reach it. The windows flickered and blinked at them.

Nothing invited them there in the look of that house, but they were now in such a forbidding waste that shelter had to be found; they were all among edges of rock as black as the night and hard as the material of which Cosmos was formed, at first upon Chaos' brink. The sound of their climbing ran noisily up the mountain but no sound came from the house: only the shadows moved more swiftly across a room, passed into other rooms and came hurrying back. Sometimes the shadows stayed and seemed to peer; and when the travellers stood and watched to see what they were they would disappear and there were no shadows at all, and the rooms were filled instead with their wondering speculation. Then they pushed on over rocks that seemed never trodden by man, so sharp were they and slanting, all piled together: it seemed the last waste, to which all shapeless rocks had been thrown.

Morano and these black rocks seemed shaped by a different scheme; indeed the rocks had never been shaped at all, they were just raw pieces of Chaos. Morano climbed over their edges with moans and discomfort. Rodriguez heard him behind him and knew by his moans when he came to the top of each sharp rock.

The rocks became savager, huger, even more sharp and more angular. They were there in the dark in multitudes. Over these Rodriguez staggered, and Morano clambered and tumbled; and so they came, breathing hard, to the lonely house.

In the wall that their hands had reached there was no door, so they felt along it till they came to the corner, and beyond the corner was the front wall of the house. In it was the front door. But so nearly did this door open upon the abyss that the bats that fled from their coming, from where they hung above the door of oak, had little more to do than fall from their crannies, slanting ever so slightly, to find themselves safe from man in the velvet darkness, that lay between cliffs so lonely they were almost strangers to Echo. And here they floated upon errands far from our knowledge; while the travellers coming along the rocky ledge between destruction and shelter, knocked on the oaken door.

The sound of their knocking boomed huge and slow through the house as though they had struck the door of the very mountain. And no one came. And then Rodriguez saw dimly in the darkness the great handle of a bell,

carved like a dragon running down the wall: he pulled it and a cry of pain arose from the basement of the house.

Even Morano wondered. It was like a terrible spirit in distress. It was long before Rodriguez dare touch the handle again. Could it have been the bell? He felt the iron handle and the iron chain that went up from it. How could it have been the bell! The bell had not sounded: he had not pulled hard enough: that scream was fortuitous. The night on that rocky ledge had jangled his nerves. He pulled again and more firmly. The answering scream was more terrible. Rodriguez could doubt no longer, as he sprang back from the bell-handle, that with the chain he had pulled he inflicted some unknown agony.

The scream had awakened slow steps that now came towards the travellers, down corridors, as it sounded, of stone. And then chains fell on stone and the door of oak was opened by some one older than what man hopes to come to, with small, peaked lips as those of some woodland thing.

"Señores," the old one said, "the Professor welcomes you."

They stood and stared at his age, and Morano blurted uncouthly what both of them felt. "You are old, grandfather," he said.

"Ah, Señores," the old man sighed, "the Professor does not allow me to be young. I have been here years and years but he never allowed it. I have served him well but it is still the same. I say to him, 'Master, I have served you long ...' but he interrupts me for he will have none of youth. Young servants go among the villages, he says. And so, and so..."

"You do not think your master can give you youth!" said Rodriguez.

The old man knew that he had talked too much, voicing that grievance again of which even the rocks were weary. "Yes," he said briefly, and bowed and led the way into the house. In one of the corridors running out of the hall down which he was leading silently, Rodriguez overtook that old man and questioned him to his face.

"Who is this professor?" he said.

By the light of a torch that spluttered in an iron clamp on the wall Rodriguez questioned him with these words, and Morano with his wondering, wistful eyes. The old man halted and turned half round, and lifted his head and answered. "In the University of Saragossa," he said with pride, "he holds the Chair of Magic."

Even the names of Oxford or Cambridge, Harvard or Yale or Princeton, move some respect, and even yet in these unlearned days. What wonder

then that the name of Saragossa heard on that lonely mountain awoke in Rodriguez some emotion of reverence and even awed Morano. As for the Chair of Magic, it was of all the royal endowments of that illustrious University the most honoured and dreaded.

"At Saragossa!" Rodriguez muttered.

"At Saragossa," the old man affirmed.

Between that ancient citadel of learning and this most savage mountain appeared a gulf scarce to be bridged by thought.

"The Professor rests in his mountain," the old man said, "because of a conjunction of the stars unfavourable to study, and his class have gone to their homes for many weeks." He bowed again and led on along that corridor of dismal stone. The others followed, and still as Rodriguez went that famous name Saragossa echoed within his mind.

And then they came to a door set deep in the stone, and their guide opened it and they went in; and there was the Professor in a mystical hat and a robe of dim purple, seated with his back to them at a table, studying the ways of the stars. "Welcome, Don Rodriguez," said the Professor before he turned round; and then he rose, and with small steps backwards and sideways and many bows, he displayed all those formulae of politeness that Saragossa knew in the golden age and which her professors loved to execute. In later years they became more elaborate still, and afterwards were lost.

Rodriguez replied rather by instinct than knowledge; he came of a house whose bows had never missed graceful ease and which had in some generations been a joy to the Court of Spain. Morano followed behind him; but his servile presence intruded upon that elaborate ceremony, and the Professor held up his hand, and Morano was held in mid stride as though the air had gripped him. There he stood motionless, having never felt magic before. And when the Professor had welcomed Rodriguez in a manner worthy of the dignity of the Chair that he held at Saragossa, he made an easy gesture and Morano was free again.

"Master," said Morano to the Professor, as soon as he found he could move, "master, it looks like magic." Picture to yourself some yokel shown into the library of a professor of Greek at Oxford, taking down from a shelf one of the books of the Odyssey, and saying to the Professor, "It looks like Greek"!

Rodriguez felt grieved by Morano's boorish ignorance. Neither he nor his host answered him.

The Professor explained that he followed the mysteries dimly, owing to a certain aspect of Orion, and that therefore his class were gone to their homes and were hunting; and so he studied alone under unfavourable auspices. And once more he welcomed Rodriguez to his roof, and would command straw to be laid down for the man that Rodriguez had brought from the Inn of the Dragon and Knight; for he, the Professor, saw all things, though certain stars would hide everything.

And when Rodriguez had appropriately uttered his thanks, he added with all humility and delicate choice of phrase a petition that he might be shown some mere rudiment of the studies for which that illustrious chair in Saragossa was famous. The Professor bowed again and, in accepting the well-rounded compliments that Rodriguez paid to the honoured post he occupied, he introduced himself by name. He had been once, he said, the Count of the Mountain, but when his astral studies had made him eminent and he had mastered the ways of the planet nearest the sun he took the title Magister Mercurii, and by this had long been known; but had now forsaken this title, great as it was, for a more glorious nomenclature, and was called in the Arabic language the Slave of Orion. When Rodriguez heard this he bowed very low.

And now the Professor asked Rodriguez in which of the activities of life his interest lay; for the Chair of Magic at Saragossa, he said, was concerned with them all.

"In war," said Rodriguez.

And Morano unostentatiously rubbed his hands; for here was one, he thought, who would soon put his master on the right way, and matters would come to a head and they would find the wars. But far from concerning himself with the wars of that age, the Slave of Orion explained that as events came nearer they became grosser or more material, and that their grossness did not leave them until they were some while passed away; so that to one whose studies were with aetherial things, near events were opaque and dim. He had a window, he explained, through which Rodriguez should see clearly the ancient wars, while another window beside it looked on all wars of the future except those which were planned already or were coming soon to earth, and which were either invisible or seen dim as through mist.

Rodriguez said that to be privileged to see so classical an example of magic would be to him both a delight and honour. Yet, as is the way of youth, he more desired to have a sight of the wars than he cared for all the learning of the Professor.

And to him who held the Chair of Magic at Saragossa it was a precious thing that his windows could be made to show these marvels, while the guest to whom he was about to display these two gems of his learning was thinking of little but what he should see through the windows, and not at all of what spells, what midnight oil, what incantations, what witchcrafts, what lonely hours among bats, had gone to the gratification of his young curiosity. It is usually thus.

The Professor rose: his cloak floated out from him as he left the chamber, and Rodriguez following where he guided saw, by the torchlight in the corridors, upon the dim purple border signs that, to his untutored ignorance of magic, were no more than hints of the affairs of the Zodiac. And if these signs were obscure it were better they were obscurer, for they dealt with powers that man needs not to possess, who has the whole earth to regulate and control; why then should he seek to govern the course of any star?

And Morano followed behind them, hoping to be allowed to get a sight of the wars.

They came to a room where two round windows were; each of them larger than the very largest plate, and of very thick glass indeed, and of a wonderful blue. The blue was like the blue of the Mediterranean at evening, when lights are in it both of ships and of sunset, and lights of harbours being lit one by one, and the light of Venus perhaps and about two other stars, so deeply did it stare and so twinkled, near its edges, with lights that were strange to that room, and so triumphed with its clear beauty over the night outside. No, it was more magical than the Mediterranean at evening, even though the peaks of the Esterels be purple and their bases melting in gold and the blue sea lying below them smiling at early stars: these windows were more mysterious than that; it was a more triumphant blue; it was like the Mediterranean seen with the eyes of Shelley, on a happy day in his youth, or like the sea round Western islands of fable seen by the fancy of Keats. They were no windows for any need of ours, unless our dreams be needs, unless our cries for the moon be urged by the same Necessity as makes us cry for bread. They were clearly concerned only with magic or

poetry; though the Professor claimed that poetry was but a branch of his subject; and it was so regarded at Saragossa, where it was taught by the name of theoretical magic, while by the name of practical magic they taught dooms, brews, hauntings, and spells.

The Professor stood before the left-hand window and pointed to its deep-blue centre. “Through this,” he said, “we see the wars that were.”

Rodriguez looked into the deep-blue centre where the great bulge of the glass came out towards him; it was near to the edges where the glass seemed thinner that the little strange lights were dancing; Morano dared to tiptoe a little nearer. Rodriguez looked and saw no night outside. Just below and near to the window was white mist, and the dim lines and smoke of what may have been recent wars; but farther away on a plain of strangely vast dimensions he saw old wars that were. War after war he saw. Battles that long ago had passed into history and had been for many ages skilled, glorious and pleasant encounters he saw even now tumbling before him in their savage confusion and dirt. He saw a leader, long glorious in histories he had read, looking round puzzled, to see what was happening, and in a very famous fight that he had planned very well. He saw retreats that History called routs, and routs that he had seen History calling retreats. He saw men winning victories without knowing they had won. Never had man pried before so shamelessly upon History, or found her such a liar. With his eyes on the great blue glass Rodriguez forgot the room, forgot time, forgot his host and poor excited Morano, as he watched those famous fights.

And now my reader wishes to know what he saw and how it was that he was able to see it.

As regards the second, my reader will readily understand that the secrets of magic are very carefully guarded, and any smatterings of it that I may ever have come by I possess, for what they are worth, subjects to oaths and penalties at which even bad men shudder. My reader will be satisfied that even those intimate bonds between reader and writer are of no use to him here. I say him as though I had only male readers, but if my reader be a lady I leave the situation confidently to her intuition. As for the things he saw, of all of these I am at full liberty to write, and yet, my reader, they would differ from History’s version: never a battle that Rodriguez saw on all the plain that swept away from that circular window, but History wrote differently. And now, my reader, the situation is this: who am I? History was a goddess among the Greeks, or is at least a distinguished personage,

perhaps with a well-earned knighthood, and certainly with widespread recognition amongst the Right Kind of People. I have none of these things. Whom, then, would you believe?

Yet I would lay my story confidently before you, my reader, trusting in the justice of my case and in your judicial discernment, but for one other thing. What will the Goddess Clio say, or the well-deserving knight, if I offend History? She has stated her case, Sir Bartimeus has written it, and then so late in the day I come with a different story, a truer but different story. What will they do? Reader, the future is dark, uncertain and long; I dare not trust myself to it if I offend History. Clio and Sir Bartimeus will make hay of my reputation; an innuendo here, a foolish fact there, they know how to do it, and not a soul will suspect the goddess of personal malice or the great historian of pique. Rodriguez gazed then through the deep blue window, forgetful of all around, on battles that had not all the elegance or neatness of which our histories so tidily tell. And as he gazed upon a merry encounter between two men on the fringe of an ancient fight he felt a touch on his shoulder and then almost a tug, and turning round beheld the room he was in. How long he had been absent from it in thought he did not know, but the Professor was still standing with folded arms where he had left him, probably well satisfied with the wonder that his most secret art had awakened in his guest. It was Morano who touched his shoulder, unable to hold back any longer his impatience to see the wars; his eyes as Rodriguez turned round were gazing at his master with dog-like wistfulness.

The absurd eagerness of Morano, his uncouth touch on his shoulder, seemed only pathetic to Rodriguez. He looked at the Professor's face, the nose like a hawk's beak, the small eyes deep down beside it, dark of hue and dreadfully bright, the silent lips. He stood there uttering no actual prohibition, concerning which Rodriguez's eyes had sought; so, stepping aside from his window, Rodriguez beckoned Morano, who at once ran forward delighted to see those ancient wars.

A slight look of scorn showed faint upon the Professor's face such as you may see anywhere when a master-craftsman perceives the gaze of the ignorant turned towards his particular subject. But he said no word, and soon speech would have been difficult, for the loud clamour of Morano filled the room: he had seen the wars and his ecstasies were ungoverned. As soon as he saw those fights he looked for the Infidels, for his religious mind

most loved to see the Infidel slain. And if my reader discern or suppose some gulf between religion and the recent business of the Inn of the Dragon and Knight, Morano, if driven to admit any connection between murder and his daily bread, would have said, "All the more need then for God's mercy through the intercession of His most blessed Saints." But these words had never passed Morano's lips, for shrewd as he was in enquiry into any matter that he desired to know, his shrewdness was no less in avoiding enquiry where there might be something that he desired not to know, such as the origin of his wages as servant of the Inn of the Dragon and Knight, those delicate gold rings with settings empty of jewels.

Morano soon recognized the Infidel by his dress, and after that no other wars concerned him. He slapped his thigh, he shouted encouragement, he howled vile words of abuse, partly because he believed that this foul abuse was rightly the due of the Infidel, and partly because he believed it delighted God.

Rodriguez stood and watched, pleased at the huge joy of the simple man. The Slave of Orion stood watching in silence too, but who knows if he felt pleasure or any other emotion? Perhaps his mind was simply like ours; perhaps, as has been claimed by learned men of the best-informed period, that mind had some control upon the comet, even when farthest out from the paths we know. Morano turned round for a moment to Rodriguez:

"Good wars, master, good wars," he said with a vast zest, and at once his head was back again at that calm blue window. In that flash of the head Rodriguez had seen his eyes, blue, round and bulging; the round man was like a boy who in some shop window has seen, unexpected, huge forbidden sweets. Clearly, in the war he watched things were going well for the Cross, for such cries came from Morano as "A pretty stroke," "There now, the dirty Infidel," "Now see God's power shown," "Spare him not, good knight; spare him not," and many more, till, uttered faster and faster, they merged into mere clamorous rejoicing.

But the battles beyond the blue window seemed to move fast, and now a change was passing across Morano's rejoicings. It was not that he swore more for the cause of the Cross, but brief, impatient, meaningless oaths slipped from him now; he was becoming irritable; a puzzled look, so far as Rodriguez could see, was settling down on his features. For a while he was silent except for the little, meaningless oaths. Then he turned round from the glass, his hands stretched out, his face full of urgent appeal.

“Masters,” he said, “God’s enemy wins!”

In answer to Morano’s pitiful look Rodriguez’ hand went to his sword-hilt; the Slave of Orion merely smiled with his lips; Morano stood there with his hands still stretched out, his face still all appeal, and something more for there was reproach in his eyes that men could tarry while the Cross was in danger and the Infidel lived. He did not know that it was all finished and over hundreds of years ago, a page of history upon which many pages were turned, and which lay as unalterable as the fate of some warm swift creature of early Eocene days over whose fossil today the strata lie long and silent.

“But can nothing be done, master?” he said when Rodriguez told him this. And when Rodriguez failed him here, he turned away from the window. To him the Infidel were game, but to see them defeating Christian knights violated the deeps of his feelings.

Morano sulky excited little more notice from his host and his master who had watched his rejoicings, and they seem to have forgotten this humble champion of Christendom. The Professor slightly bowed to Rodriguez and extended a graceful hand. He pointed to the other window.

Reader, your friend shows you his collection of stamps, his fossils, his poems, or his luggage labels. One of them interests you, you look at it awhile, you are ready to go away: then your friend shows you another. This also must be seen; for your friend’s collection is a precious thing; it is that point upon huge Earth on which his spirit has lit, on which it rests, on which it shelters even (who knows from what storms?). To slight it were to weaken such hold as his spirit has, in its allotted time, upon this sphere. It were like breaking the twig of a plant upon which a butterfly rests, and on some stormy day and late in the year.

Rodriguez felt all this dimly, but no less surely; and went to the other window.

Below the window were those wars that were soon coming to Spain, hooded in mist and invisible. In the centre of the window swam as profound a blue, dwindling to paler splendour at the edge, the wandering lights were as lovely, as in the other window just to the left; but in the view from the right-hand window how sombre a difference. A bare yard separated the two. Through the window to the left was colour, courtesy, splendour; there was Death at least disguising himself, well cloaked, taking mincing steps, bowing, wearing a plume in his hat and a decent mask. In the right-hand

window all the colours were fading, war after war they grew dimmer; and as the colours paled Death's sole purpose showed clearer. Through the beautiful left-hand window were killings to be seen, and less mercy than History supposes, yet some of the fighters were merciful, and mercy was sometimes a part of Death's courtly pose, which went with the cloak and the plume. But in the other window through that deep, beautiful blue Rodriguez saw Man make a new ally, an ally who was only cruel and strong and had no purpose but killing, who had no pretences or pose, no mask and no manner, but was only the slave of Death and had no care but for his business. He saw it grow bigger and stronger. Heart it had none, but he saw its cold steel core scheming methodical plans and dreaming always destruction. Before it faded men and their fields and their houses. Rodriguez saw the machine.

Many a proud invention of ours that Rodriguez saw raging on that ruinous plain he might have anticipated, but not for all Spain would he have done so: it was for the sake of Spain that he was silent about much that he saw through that window. As he looked from war to war he saw almost the same men fighting, men with always the same attitude to the moment and with similar dim conception of larger, vaguer things; grandson differed imperceptibly from grandfather; he saw them fight sometimes mercifully, sometimes murderously, but in all the wars beyond that twinkling window he saw the machine spare nothing.

Then he looked farther, for the wars that were farthest from him in time were farther away from the window. He looked farther and saw the ruins of Peronne. He saw them all alone with their doom at night, all drenched in white moonlight, sheltering huge darkness in their stricken hollows. Down the white street, past darkness after darkness as he went by the gaping rooms that the moon left mourning alone, Rodriguez saw a captain going back to the wars in that far-future time, who turned his head a moment as he passed, looking Rodriguez in the face, and so went on through the ruins to find a floor on which to lie down for the night. When he was gone the street was all alone with disaster, and moonlight pouring down, and the black gloom in the houses.

Rodriguez lifted his eyes and glanced from city to city, to Albert, Bapaume, and Arras, his gaze moved over a plain with its harvest of desolation lying forlorn and ungathered, lit by the flashing clouds and the moon and peering rockets. He turned from the window and wept.

The deep round window glowed with serene blue glory. It seemed a foolish thing to weep by that beautiful glass. Morano tried to comfort him. That calm, deep blue, he felt, and those little lights, surely, could hurt no one.

What had Rodriguez seen? Morano asked. But that Rodriguez would not answer, and told no man ever after what he had seen through that window.

The Professor stood silent still: he had no comfort to offer; indeed his magical wisdom had found none for the world.

You wonder perhaps why the Professor did not give long ago to the world some of these marvels that are the pride of our age. Reader, let us put aside my tale for a moment to answer this. For all the darkness of his sinister art there may well have been some good in the Slave of Orion; and any good there was, and mere particle even, would surely have spared the world many of those inventions that our age has not spared it. Blame not the age, it is now too late to stop; it is in the grip of inventions now, and has to go on; we cannot stop content with mustard-gas; it is the age of Progress, and our motto is Onwards. And if there was no good in this magical man, then may it not have been he who in due course, long after he himself was safe from life, caused our inventions to be so deadly divulged? Some evil spirit has done it, then why not he?

He stood there silent: let us return to our story.

Perhaps the efforts of poor clumsy Morano to comfort him cheered Rodriguez and sent him back to the window, perhaps he turned from them to find comfort of his own; but, however he came by it, he had a hope that this was a passing curse that had come on the world, whose welfare he cared for whether he lived or died, and that looking a little farther into the future he would see Mother Earth smiling and her children happy again. So he looked through the deep-blue luminous window once more, beyond the battles we know. From this he turned back shuddering.

Again he saw the Professor smile with his lips, though whether at his own weakness, or whether with cynical mirth at the fate of the world, Rodriguez could not say.

THE FOURTH CHRONICLE

HOW HE CAME TO THE MOUNTAINS OF THE SUN

The Professor said that in curiosity alone had been found the seeds of all that is needful for our damnation. Nevertheless, he said, if Rodriguez cared to see more of his mighty art the mysteries of Saragossa were all at his guest's disposal.

Rodriguez, sad and horrified though he was, forgot none of his courtesy. He thanked the Professor and praised the art of Saragossa, but his faith in man and his hope for the world having been newly disappointed, he cared little enough for the things we should care to see or for any of the amusements that are usually dear to youth.

"I shall be happy to see anything, señor," he said to the Slave of Orion, "that is further from our poor Earth, and to study therein and admire your famous art."

The Professor bowed. He drew small curtains over the windows, matching his cloak. Morano sought a glimpse through the right-hand window before the curtains covered it. Rodriguez held him back. Enough had been seen already, he thought, through that window for the peace of mind of the world: but he said no word to Morano. He held him by the arm, and the Professor covered the windows. When the little mauve curtains were drawn it seemed to Rodriguez that the windows behind them disappeared and were there no more; but this he only guessed from uncertain indications.

Then the Professor drew forth his wand and went to his cupboard of wonder. Thence he brought condiments, oils, and dews of amazement. These he poured into a vessel that was in the midst of the room, a bowl of agate standing alone on a table. He lit it and it all welled up in flame, a low broad flame of the colour of pale emerald. Over this he waved his wand, which was of exceeding blackness. Morano watched as children watch the dancer, who goes from village to village when spring is come, with some new dance out of Asia or some new song.[Footnote: He doesn't, but why shouldn't he?] Rodriguez sat and waited. The Professor explained that to leave this Earth alive, or even dead, was prohibited to our bodies, unless to a very few, whose names were hidden. Yet the spirits of men could by

incantation be liberated, and being liberated, could be directed on journeys by such minds as had that power passed down to them from of old. Such journeys, he said, were by no means confined by the hills of Earth. “The Saints,” exclaimed Morano, “guard us utterly!” But Rodriguez smiled a little. His faith was given to the Saints of Heaven. He wondered at their wonders, he admired their miracles, he had little faith to spare for other marvels; in fact he did not believe the Slave of Orion.

“Do you desire such a journey?” said the Professor.

“It will delight me,” answered Rodriguez, “to see this example of your art.”

“And you?” he said to Morano.

The question seemed to alarm the placid Morano, but “I follow my master,” he said.

At once the Professor stretched out his ebony wand, calling the green flame higher. Then he put out his hands over the flame, without the wand, moving them slowly with constantly tremulous fingers. And all at once they heard him begin to speak. His deep voice flowed musically while he scarcely seemed to be speaking but seemed only to be concerned with moving his hands. It came soft, as though blown faint from fabulous valleys, illimitably far from the land of Spain. It seemed full not so much of magic as mere sleep, either sleep in an unknown country of alien men, or sleep in a land dreamed sleeping a long while since. As the travellers heard it they thought of things far away, of mythical journeys and their own earliest years.

They did not know what he said or what language he used. At first Rodriguez thought Moorish, then he deemed it some secret language come down from magicians of old, while Morano merely wondered; and then they were lulled by the rhythm of those strange words, and so enquired no more. Rodriguez pictured some sad wandering angel, upon some mountain-peak of African lands, resting a moment and talking to the solitudes, telling the lonely valley the mysteries of his home. While lulled though Morano was he gave up his alertness uneasily. All the while the green flame flooded upwards: all the while the tremulous fingers made curious shadows. The shadow seemed to run to Rodriguez and beckon him thence: even Morano felt them calling. Rodriguez closed his eyes. The voice and the Moorish spells made now a more haunting melody: they were now like a golden organ on undiscoverable mountains. Fear came on Morano at the thought:

who had power to speak like this? He grasped Rodriguez by the wrist. “Master!” he said, but at that moment on one of those golden spells the spirit of Rodriguez drifted away from his body, and out of the greenish light of the curious room; unhampered by weight, or fatigue, or pain, or sleep; and it rose above the rocks and over the mountain, an unencumbered spirit: and the spirit of Morano followed.

The mountain dwindled at once; the Earth swept out all round them and grew larger, and larger still, and then began to dwindle. They saw then that they were launched upon some astounding journey. Does my reader wonder they saw when they had no eyes? They saw as they had never seen before, with sight beyond what they had ever thought to be possible. Our eyes gather in light, and with the little rays of light that they bring us we gather a few images of things as we suppose them to be. Pardon me, reader, if I call them things as we suppose them to be; call them by all means Things As They Really Are, if you wish. These images then, this tiny little brainful that we gather from the immensities, are all brought in by our eyesight upside-down, and the brain corrects them again; and so, and so we know something. An oculist will tell you how it all works. He may admit it is all a little clumsy, or for the dignity of his profession he may say it is not at all. But be this as it may, our eyes are but barriers between us and the immensities. All our five senses that grope a little here and touch a little there, and seize, and compare notes, and get a little knowledge sometimes, they are only barriers between us and what there is to know. Rodriguez and Morano were outside these barriers. They saw without the imperfections of eyesight; they heard on that journey what would have deafened ears; they went through our atmosphere unburned by speed, and were unchilled in the bleak of the outer spaces. Thus freed of the imperfections of the body they sped, no less upon a terrible journey, whose direction as yet Rodriguez only began to fear.

They had seen the stars pale rapidly and then the flash of dawn. The Sun rushed up and at once began to grow larger. Earth, with her curved sides still diminishing violently, was soon a small round garden in blue and filmy space, in which mountains were planted. And still the Sun was growing wider and wider. And now Rodriguez, though he knew nothing of Sun or planets, perceived the obvious truth of their terrible journey: they were heading straight for the Sun. But the spirit of Morano was merely astounded; yet, being free of the body he suffered none of those

inconveniences that perturbation may bring to us: spirits do not gasp, or palpitate, or weaken, or sicken.

The dwindling Earth seemed now no more than the size of some unmapped island seen from a mountain-top, an island a hundred yards or so across, looking like a big table.

Speed is comparative: compared to sound, their pace was beyond comparison; nor could any modern projectile attain any velocity comparable to it; even the speed of explosion was slow to it. And yet for spirits they were moving slowly, who being independent of all material things, travel with such velocities as that, for instance, of thought. But they were controlled by one still dwelling on Earth, who used material things, and the material that the Professor was using to hurl them upon their journey was light, the adaptation of which to this purpose he had learned at Saragossa. At the pace of light they were travelling towards the Sun.

They crossed the path of Venus, far from where Venus then was, so that she scarcely seemed larger to them; Earth was but little bigger than the Evening Star, looking dim in that monstrous daylight.

Crossing the path of Mercury, Mercury appeared huger than our Moon, an object weirdly unnatural; and they saw ahead of them the terrific glare in which Mercury basks, from a Sun whose withering orb had more than doubled its width since they came from the hills of Earth. And after this the Sun grew terribly larger, filling the centre of the sky, and spreading and spreading and spreading. It was now that they saw what would have dazzled eyes, would have burned up flesh and would have shrivelled every protection that our scientists' ingenuity could have devised even today. To speak of time there is meaningless. There is nothing in the empty space between the Sun and Mercury with which time is at all concerned. Far less is there meaning in time wherever the spirits of men are under stress. A few minutes' bombardment in a trench, a few hours in a battle, a few weeks' travelling in a trackless country; these minutes, these hours, these weeks can never be few.

Rodriguez and Morano had been travelling about six or seven minutes, but it seems idle to say so.

And then the Sun began to fill the whole sky in front of them. And in another minute, if minutes had any meaning, they were heading for a boundless region of flame that, left and right, was everywhere, and now towered above them, and went below them into a flaming abyss.

And now Morano spoke to Rodriguez. He thought towards him, and Rodriguez was aware of his thinking: it is thus that spirits communicate.

"Master," he said, "when it was all spring in Spain, years ago when I was thin and young, twenty years gone at least; and the butterflies were come, and song was everywhere; there came a maid bare-footed over a stream, walking through flowers, and all to pluck the anemones." How fair she seemed even now, how bright that far spring day. Morano told Rodriguez not with his blundering lips: they were closed and resting deeply millions of miles away: he told him as spirits tell. And in that clear communication Rodriguez saw all that shone in Morano's memory, the grace of the young girl's ankles, the thrill of Spring, the anemones larger and brighter than anemones ever were, the hawks still in clear sky; earth happy and heaven blue, and the dreams of youth between. You would not have said, had you seen Morano's coarse fat body, asleep in a chair in the Professor's room, that his spirit treasured such delicate, nymph-like, pastoral memories as now shone clear to Rodriguez. No words the blunt man had ever been able to utter had ever hinted that he sometimes thought like a dream of pictures by Watteau. And now in that awful space before the power of the terrible Sun, spirit communed with spirit, and Rodriguez saw the beauty of that far day, framed all about the beauty of one young girl, just as it had been for years in Morano's memory. How shall I tell with words what spirit sang wordless to spirit? We poets may compete with each other in words; but when spirits give up the purest gold of their store, that has shone far down the road of their earthly journey, cheering tired hearts and guiding mortal feet, our words shall barely interpret.

Love, coming long ago over flowers in Spain, found Morano; words did not tell the story, words cannot tell it; as a lake reflects a cloud in the blue of heaven, so Rodriguez understood and felt and knew this memory out of the days of Morano's youth. "And so, master," said Morano, "I sinned, and would indeed repent, and yet even now at this last dread hour I cannot abjure that day; and this is indeed Hell, as the good father said."

Rodriguez tried to comfort Morano with such knowledge as he had of astronomy, if knowledge it could be called. Indeed, if he had known anything he would have perplexed Morano more, and his little pieces of ignorance were well adapted for comfort. But Morano had given up hope, having long been taught to expect this very fire: his spirit was no wiser than it had been on Earth, it was merely freed of the imperfections of the five

senses and so had observation and expression beyond those of any artist the world has known. This was the natural result of being freed of the body; but he was not suddenly wiser; and so, as he moved towards this boundless flame, he expected every moment to see Satan charge out to meet him: and having no hope for the future he turned to the past and fondled the memory of that one spring day. His was a backsliding, unrepentant spirit.

As that monstrous sea of flame grew ruthlessly larger Rodriguez felt no fear, for spirits have no fear of material things: but Morano feared. He feared as spirits fear spiritual things; he thought he neared the home of vast spirits of evil and that the arena of conflict was eternity. He feared with a fear too great to be borne by bodies. Perhaps the fat body that slept on a chair on earth was troubled in dreams by some echo of that fear that gripped the spirit so sorely. And it may be from such far fears that all our nightmares come.

When they had travelled nearly ten minutes from Earth and were about to pass into the midst of the flame, that magician who controlled their journey halted them suddenly in Space, among the upper mountain-peaks of the Sun. There they hovered as the clouds hover that leave their companions and drift among crags of the Alps: below them those awful mountains heaved and thundered. All Atlas, and Teneriffe, and lonely Kenia might have lain amongst them unnoticed. As often as the earthquake rocked their bases it loosened from near their summits wild avalanches of gold that swept down their flaming slopes with unthinkable tumult. As they watched, new mountains rode past them, crowned with their frightful flames; for, whether man knew it or not, the Sun was rotating, but the force of its gravity that swung the planets had no grip upon spirits, who were held by the power of that tremendous spell that the Professor had learned one midnight at Saragossa from one of that dread line who have their secrets from a source that we do not know in a distant age.

There is always something tremendous in the form of great mountains; but these swept by, not only huger than anything Earth knows, but troubled by horrible commotions, as though overtaken in flight by some ceaseless calamity.

Rodriguez and Morano, as they looked at them, forgetting the gardens of Earth, forgetting Spring and Summer and the sweet beneficence of sunshine, felt that the purpose of Creation was evil! So shocking a thought may well astound us here, where green hills slope to lawns or peer at a

peaceful sea; but there among the flames of those dreadful peaks the Sun seemed not the giver of joy and colour and life, but only a catastrophe huger than everlasting war, a centre of hideous violence and ruin and anger and terror. There came by mountains of copper burning everlasting, hurling up to unthinkable heights their mass of emerald flame. And mountains of iron raged by and mountains of salt, quaking and thundering and clothed with their colours, the iron always scarlet and the salt blue. And sometimes there came by pinnacles a thousand miles high that from base to summit were fire, mountains of pure flame that had no other substance. And these explosive mountains, born of thunder and earthquake, hurling down avalanches the size of our continents, and drawing upward out of the deeps of the Sun new material for splendour and horror, this roaring waste, this extravagant destruction, were necessary for every tint that our butterflies wear on their wings. Without those flaming ranges of mountains of iron they would have no red to show; even the poppy could have no red for her petals: without the flames that were blasting the mountains of salt there could be no answering blue in any wing, or one blue flower for all the bees of Earth: without the nightmare light of those frightful canyons of copper that awed the two spirits watching their ceaseless ruin, the very leaves of the woods we love would be without their green with which to welcome Spring; for from the flames of the various metals and wonders that for ever blaze in the Sun, our sunshine gets all its colours that it conveys to us almost unseen, and thence the wise little insects and patient flowers softly draw the gay tints that they glory in; there is nowhere else to get them.

And yet to Rodriguez and Morano all that they saw seemed wholly and hideously evil.

How long they may have watched there they tried to guess afterwards, but as they looked on those terrific scenes they had no way to separate days from minutes: nothing about them seemed to escape destruction, and time itself seemed no calmer than were those shuddering mountains.

Then the thundering ranges passed; and afterwards there came a gleaming mountain, one huge and lonely peak, seemingly all of gold. Had our whole world been set beside it and shaped as it was shaped, that golden mountain would yet have towered above it: it would have taken our moon as well to reach that flashing peak. It rode on toward them in its golden majesty, higher than all the flames, save now and then when some wild gas

seemed to flee from the dread earthquakes of the Sun, and was overtaken in the height by fire, even above that mountain.

As that mass of gold that was higher than all the world drew near to Rodriguez and Morano they felt its unearthly menace; and though it could not overcome their spirits they knew there was a hideous terror about it. It was in its awful scale that its terror lurked for any creature of our planet. Though they could not quake or tremble they felt that terror. The mountain dwarfed Earth.

Man knows his littleness, his own mountains remind him; many countries are small, and some nations: but the dreams of Man make up for our faults and failings, for the brevity of our lives, for the narrowness of our scope; they leap over boundaries and are away and away. But this great mountain belittled the world and all: who gazed on it knew all his dreams to be puny. Before this mountain Man seemed a trivial thing, and Earth, and all the dreams Man had of himself and his home.

The golden mass drew opposite those two watchers and seemed to challenge with its towering head the pettiness of the tiny world they knew. And then the whole gleaming mountain gave one shudder and fell into the awful plains of the Sun. Straight down before Rodriguez and Morano it slipped roaring, till the golden peak was gone, and the molten plain closed over it; and only ripples remained, the size of Europe, as when a tumbling river strikes the rocks of its bed and on its surface heaving circles widen and disappear. And then, as though this horror left nothing more to be shown, they felt the Professor beckon to them from Earth.

Over the plains of the Sun a storm was sweeping in gusts of howling flame as they felt the Professor’s spell drawing them home. For the magnitude of that storm there are no words in use among us; its velocity, if expressed in figures, would have no meaning; its heat was immeasurable. Suffice it to say that if such a tempest could have swept over Earth for a second, both the poles would have boiled. The travellers left it galloping over that plain, rippled from underneath by the restless earthquake and whipped into flaming foam by the force of the storm. The Sun already was receding from them, already growing smaller. Soon the storm seemed but a cloud of light sweeping over the empty plain, like a murderous mourner rushing swiftly away from the grave of that mighty mountain.

And now the Professor’s spell gripped them in earnest: rapidly the Sun grew smaller. As swiftly as he had sent them upon that journey he was now

drawing them home. They overtook thunders that they had heard already, and passed them, and came again to the silent spaces which the thunders of the Sun are unable to cross, so that even Mercury is undisturbed by them.

I have said that spirits neither fade nor weary. But a great sadness was on them; they felt as men feel who come whole away from periods of peril. They had seen cataclysms too vast for our imagination, and a mournfulness and a satiety were upon them. They could have gazed at one flower for days and needed no other experience, as a wounded man may be happy staring at the flame of a candle.

Crossing the paths of Mercury and Venus, they saw that these planets had not appreciably moved, and Rodriguez, who knew that planets wander in the night, guessed thereby that they had not been absent from Earth for many hours.

They rejoiced to see the Sun diminishing steadily. Only for a moment as they started their journey had they seen that solar storm rushing over the plains of the Sun; but now it appeared to hang halted in its mid anger, as though blasting one region eternally.

Moving on with the pace of light, they saw Earth, soon after crossing the path of Venus, beginning to grow larger than a star. Never had home appeared more welcome to wanderers, who see their house far off, returning home.

And as Earth grew larger, and they began to see forms that seemed like seas and mountains, they looked for their own country, but could not find it: for, travelling straight from the Sun, they approached that part of the world that was then turned towards it, and were heading straight for China, while Spain lay still in darkness.

But when they came near Earth and its mountains were clear, then the Professor drew them across the world, into the darkness and over Spain; so that those two spirits ended their marvellous journey much as the snipe ends his, a drop out of heaven and a swoop low over marshes. So they came home, while Earth seemed calling to them with all her voices; with memories, sights and scents, and little sounds; calling anxiously, as though they had been too long away and must be home soon. They heard a cock crow on the edge of the night; they heard more little sounds than words can say; only the organ can hint at them. It was Earth calling. For, talk as we may of our dreams that transcend this sphere, or our hopes that build beyond it, Mother Earth has yet a mighty hold upon us; and her myriad

sounds were blending in one cry now, knowing that it was late and that these two children of hers were nearly lost. For our spirits that sometimes cross the path of the angels, and on rare evenings hear a word of their talk, and have brief equality with the Powers of Light, have the duty also of moving fingers and toes, which freeze if our proud spirits forget their task for too long.

And just as Earth was despairing they reached the Professor's mountain and entered the room in which their bodies were.

Blue and cold and ugly looked the body of Morano, but for all its pallor there was beauty in the young face of Rodriguez.

The Professor stood before them as he had stood when their spirits left, with the table between him and the bodies, and the bowl on the table which held the green flame, now low and flickering desperately, which the Professor watched as it leaped and failed, with an air of anxiety that seemed to pinch his thin features.

With an impatience strange to him he waved a swift hand towards each of the two bodies where they sat stiff, illumined by the last of the green light; and at those rapid gestures the travellers returned to their habitations.

They seemed to be just awakening out of deep sleep. Again they saw the Professor standing before them. But they saw him only with blinking eyes, they saw him only as eyes can see, guessing at his mind from the lines of his face, at his thoughts from the movements of his hands, guessing as men guess, blindly: only a moment before they had known him utterly. Now they were dazed and forgetting: slow blood began to creep again to their toes and to come again to its place under fingernails: it came with intense pain: they forgot their spirits. Then all the woes of Earth crowded their minds at once, so that they wished to weep, as infants weep.

The Professor gave this mood time to change, as change it presently did. For the warm blood came back and lit their cheeks, and a tingling succeeded the pain in their fingers and toes, and a mild warmth succeeded the tingling: their thoughts came back to the things of every day, to mundane things and the affairs of the body. Therein they rejoiced, and Morano no less than Rodriguez; though it was a coarse and common body that Morano's spirit inhabited. And when the Professor saw that the first sorrow of Earth, which all spirits feel when they land here, had passed away, and that they were feeling again the joy of mundane things, only then did he speak.

“Señor,” he said, “beyond the path of Mars run many worlds that I would have you know. The greatest of these is Jupiter, towards whom all that follow my most sacred art show reverent affection. The smallest are those that sometimes strike our world, flaming all green upon November nights, and are even as small as apples.” He spoke of our world with a certain air and a pride, as though, through virtue of his transcendent art, the world were only his. “The world that we name Argola,” he said, “is far smaller than Spain and, being invisible from Earth, is only known to the few who have spoken to spirits whose wanderings have surpassed the path of Mars. Nearly half of Argola you shall find covered with forests, which though very dense are no deeper than moss, and the elephants in them are not larger than beetles. You shall see many wonders of smallness in this world of Argola, which I desire in especial to show you, since it is the orb with which we who study the Art are most familiar, of all the worlds that the vulgar have not known. It is indeed the prize of our traffic in those things that far transcend the laws that have forbidden them.”

And as he said this the green flame in the bowl before him died, and he moved towards his cupboard of wonder. Rodriguez hastily thanked the Professor for his great courtesy in laying bare before him secrets that the centuries hid, and then he referred to his own great unworthiness, to the lateness of the hour, to the fatigue of the Professor, and to the importance to Learning of adequate rest to refresh his illustrious mind. And all that he said the Professor parried with bows, and drew enchantments from his cupboard of wonder to replenish the bowl on the table. And Rodriguez saw that he was in the clutch of a collector, one who having devoted all his days to a hobby will exhibit his treasures to the uttermost, and that the stars that magic knows were no less to the Professor than all the whatnots that a man collects and insists on showing to whomsoever enters his house. He feared some terrible journey, perhaps some bare escape; for though no material thing can quite encompass a spirit, he knew not what wanderers he might not meet in lonely spaces beyond the path of Mars. So when his last polite remonstrance failed, being turned aside with a pleasant phrase and a smile from the grim lips, and looking at Morano he saw that he shared his fears, then he determined to show whatever resistance were needed to keep himself and Morano in this old world that we know, or that youth at least believes that it knows.

He watched the Professor return with his packets of wonder; dust from a fallen star, phials of tears of lost lovers, poison and gold out of elf-land, and all manner of things. But the moment that he put them into the bowl Rodriguez' hand flew to his sword-hilt. He heaved up his elbow, but no sword came forth, for it lay magnetised to its scabbard by the grip of a current of magic. When Rodriguez saw this he knew not what to do.

The Professor went on pouring into the bowl. He added an odour distilled out of dream-roses, three drops from the gall-bladder of a fabulous beast, and a little dust that had been man. More too he added, so that my reader might wonder were I to tell him all; yet it is not so easy to free our spirits from the gross grip of our bodies. Wonder not then, my reader, if the Professor exerted strange powers. And all the while Morano was picking at a nail that fastened on the handle to his frying-pan.

And just as the last few mysteries were shaken into the bowl, — and there were two among them of which even Asia is ignorant, — just as the dews were blended with the powers in a grey-green sinister harmony, Morano untwisted his nail and got the handle loose.

The Professor kindled the mixture in the bowl; again green flame arose, again that voice of his began to call to their spirits, and its beauty and the power of its spell were as of some fallen angel. The spirit of Rodriguez was nearly passing helplessly forth again on some frightful journey, when Morano losed his scabbard and sword from its girdle and tied the handle of his frying-pan across it a little below the hilt with a piece of string. Across the table the Professor intoned his spell, across a narrow table, but it seemed to come from the far side of the twilight, a twilight red and golden in long layers, of an evening wonderfully long ago. It seemed to take its music out of the lights that it flowed through and to call Rodriguez from immediately far away, with a call which it were sacrilege to refuse, and anguish even, and hard toil such as there was no strength to do. And then Morano held up the sword in its scabbard with the handle of the frying-pan tied across. Rodriguez, disturbed by a stammer in the spell, looked up and saw the Professor staring at the sword where Morano held it up before his face in the green light of the flame from the bowl. He did not seem like a fallen angel now. His spell had stopped. He seemed like a professor who had forgotten the theme of his lecture, while the class waits. For Morano was holding up the sign of the cross.

“You have betrayed me!” shouted the Slave of Orion: the green flame died, and he strode out of the room, his purple cloak floating behind him.

“Master,” Morano said, “it was always good against magic.”

The sword was loose in the scabbard as Rodriguez took it back; there was no longer a current of magic gripping the steel.

A little uneasily Rodriguez thanked Morano: he was not sure if Morano had behaved as a guest’s servant should. But when he thought of the Professor’s terrible spells, which had driven them to the awful crags of the sun, and might send them who knows where to hob-nob with who knows what, his second thoughts perceived that Morano was right to cut short those arts that the Slave of Orion loved, even by so extreme a step: and he praised Morano as his ready shrewdness deserved.

“We were very nearly too late back from that outing, master,” remarked Morano.

“How know you that?” said Rodriguez.

“This old body knew,” said Morano. “Those heart-thumpings, this warmness, and all the things that make a fat body comfortable, they were stopping, master, they were spoiling, they were getting cold and strange: I go no more errands for that señor.”

A certain diffidence about criticising his host even now; and a very practical vein that ran through his nature, now showing itself in anxiety for a bed at so late an hour, led Rodriguez to change the subject. He wanted that aged butler, yet dare not ring the bell; for he feared lest with all the bells there might be in use that frightful practice that he had met by the outer door, a chain connected with some hideous hook that gave anguish to something in the basement whenever one touched the handle, so that the menials of that grim Professor were shrilly summoned by screams. And therefore Rodriguez sought counsel of Morano, who straightway volunteered to find the butler’s quarters, by a certain sense that he had of the fitness of things: and forth he went, but would not leave the room without the scabbard and the handle of the frying-pan lashed to it, which he bore high before him in both his hands as though he were leading some austere procession. And even so he returned with that aged man the butler, who led them down dim corridors of stone; but, though he showed the way, Morano would go in front, still holding up that scabbard and handle before him, while Rodriguez held the bare sword. And so they came to a room lit by the flare of one candle, which their guide told them the Professor had

prepared for his guest. In the vastness of it was a great bed. Shadows and a whir as of wings passed out of the door as they entered. “Bats,” said the ancient guide. But Morano believed he had routed powers of evil with the handle of his frying-pan and his master’s scabbard. Who could say what they were in such a house, where bats and evil spirits sheltered perennially from the brooms of the just? Then that ancient man with the lips of some woodland thing departed, and Rodriguez went to the great bed. On a pile of straw that had been cast into the room Morano lay down across the door, setting the scabbard upright in a rat-hole near his head, while Rodriguez lay down with the bare sword in his hand. There was only one door in the room, and this Morano guarded. Windows there were, but they were shuttered with raw oak of enormous thickness. He had already enquired with his sword behind the velvet curtains. He felt secure in the bulk of Morano across the only door, at least from creatures of this world: and Morano feared no longer either spirit or spell, believing that he had vanquished the Professor with his symbol, and all such allies as he may have had here or elsewhere. But not thus easily do we overcome the powers of evil.

A step was heard such as man walks with at the close of his later years, coming along the corridor of stone; and they knew it for the Professor’s butler returning. The latch of the door trembled and lifted, and the great oak door bumped slowly against Morano, who arose grumbling, and the old man appeared.

“The Professor,” he said, while Morano watched him grudgingly, “returns with all his household to Saragossa at once, to resume those studies for which his name resounds, a certain conjunction of the stars having come favourably.”

Even Morano doubted that so suddenly the courses of the stars, which he deemed to be gradual, should have altered from antagonism towards the Professor’s art into a favourable aspect. Rodriguez sleepily acknowledged the news and settled himself to sleep, still sword in hand, when the servitor repeated with as much emphasis as his aged voice could utter, “With all his household, señor.”

“Yes,” muttered Rodriguez. “Farewell.”

And repeating again, “He takes his household with him,” the old man shuffled back from the room and hesitatingly closed the door. Before the sound of his slow footsteps had failed to reach the room Morano was asleep

under his cross. Rodriguez still watched for a while the shadows leaping and shuddering away from the candle, riding over the ceiling, striding hugely along the walls, towards him and from him, as draughts swayed the ruddy flame; then, gripping his sword still firmer in his hand, as though that could avail against magic, he fell into the sleep of tired men.

No sound disturbed Rodriguez or Morano till both awoke in late morning upon the rocks of the mountain. The sun had climbed over the crags and now shone on their faces. Rodriguez was still lying with his sword gripped in his hand, but the cross had fallen by Morano and now lay on the rocks beside him with the handle of the frying-pan still tied in its place by string. A young, wild, woodland squirrel gambolled near, though there were no woods for it anywhere within sight: it leaped and played as though rejoicing in youth, with such merriment as though youth had but come to it newly or been lost and restored again.

All over the mountain they looked but there was no house, nor any sign of dwelling of man or spirit.

THE FIFTH CHRONICLE

HOW HE RODE IN THE TWILIGHT AND SAW SERAFINA

Rodriguez, who loved philosophy, turned his mind at once to the journey that lay before him, deciding which was the north; for he knew that it was by the north that he must leave Spain, which he still desired to leave since there were no wars in that country.

Morano knew not clearly what philosophy was, yet he wasted no thoughts upon the night that was gone; and, fitting up his frying-pan immediately, he brought out what was left of his bacon and began to look for material to make a fire. The bacon lay waiting in the frying-pan for some while before this material was gathered, for nothing grew on the mountain but a heath; and of that there were few bushes, scattered here and there.

Rodriguez, far from ruminating upon the events of the previous night, realised as he watched these preparations that he was enormously hungry. And when Morano had kindled a fire and the smell of cooking arose, he who had held the chair of magic at Saragossa was banished from both their minds, although upon this very spot they had spent so strange a night; but where bacon is, and there be hungry men, the things of yesterday are often forgotten.

“Morano,” said Rodriguez, “we must walk far to-day.”

“Indeed, master,” said Morano, “we must push on to these wars; for you have no castle, master, no lands, no fortune ...”

“Come,” said Rodriguez.

Morano slung his frying-pan behind him: they had eaten up the last of his bacon: he stood up, and they were ready for the journey. The smoke from their meagre fire went thinly into the air, the small grey clouds of it went slowly up: nothing beside remained to bid them farewell, or for them to thank for their strange night’s hospitality. They climbed till they reached the rugged crest of the mountain; thence they saw a wide plain and the morning: the day was waiting for them.

The northern slope of the mountain was wholly different from that black congregation of angry rocks through which they had climbed by night to the House of Wonder.

The slope that now lay before them was smooth and grassy, flowing before them far, a gentle slope that was soon to lend speed to Rodriguez' feet, adding nimbleness even to youth. Soon, too, it was to lift onward the dull weight of Morano as he followed his master towards unknown wars, youth going before him like a spirit and the good slope helping behind. But before they gave themselves to that waiting journey they stood a moment and looked at the shining plain that lay before them like an open page, on which was the whole chronicle of that day's wayfaring. There was the road they should travel by, there were the streams it crossed and narrow woods they might rest in, and dim on the farthest edge was the place they must spend that night. It was all, as it were written, upon the plain they watched, but in a writing not intended for them, and, clear although it be, never to be interpreted by one of our race. Thus they saw clear, from a height, the road they would go by, but not one of all the events to which it would lead them.

"Master," said Morano, "shall we have more adventures to-day?"

"I trust so," said Rodriguez. "We have far to go, and it will be dull journeying without them."

Morano turned his eyes from his master's face and looked back to the plain. "There, master," he said, "where our road runs through a wood, will our adventure be there, think you? Or there, perhaps," and he waved his hand widely farther.

"No," said Rodriguez, "we pass that in bright daylight."

"Is that not good for adventure?" said Morano.

"The romances teach," said Rodriguez, "that twilight or night are better. The shade of deep woods is favourable, but there are no such woods on this plain. When we come to evening we shall doubtless meet some adventure, far over there." And he pointed to the grey rim of the plain where it started climbing towards hills.

"These are good days," said Morano. He forgot how short a time ago he had said regretfully that these days were not as the old days. But our race, speaking generally, is rarely satisfied with the present, and Morano's cheerfulness had not come from his having risen suddenly superior to this everyday trouble of ours; it came from his having shifted his gaze to the future. Two things are highly tolerable to us, and even alluring, the past and the future. It was only with the present that Morano was ever dissatisfied.

When Morano said that the days were good Rodriguez set out to find them, or at least that one that for some while now lay waiting for them on

the plain. He strode down the slope at once and, endowing nature with his own impatience, he felt that he heard the morning call to him wistfully. Morano followed.

For an hour these refugees escaping from peace went down the slope; and in that hour they did five swift miles, miles that seemed to run by them as they walked, and so they came lightly to the level plain. And in the next hour they did four miles more. Words were few, either because Morano brooded mainly upon one thought, the theme of which was his lack of bacon, or because he kept his breath to follow his master who, with youth and the morning, was coming out of the hills at a pace not tuned to Morano's forty years or so. And at the end of these nine miles Morano perceived a house, a little way from the road, on the left, upon rising ground. A mile or so ahead they saw the narrow wood that they had viewed in the morning from the mountain running across the plain. They saw now by the lie of the ground that it probably followed a stream, a pleasant place in which to take the rest demanded by Spain at noon. It was just an hour to noon; so Rodriguez, keeping the road, told Morano to join him where it entered the wood when he had acquired his bacon. And then as they parted a thought occurred to Rodriguez, which was that bacon cost money. It was purely an afterthought, an accidental fancy, such as inspirations are, for he had never had to buy bacon. So he gave Morano a fifth part of his money, a large gold coin the size of one of our five-shilling pieces, engraved of course upon one side with the glories and honours of that golden period of Spain, and upon the other with the head of the lord the King. It was only by chance he had brought any at all; he was not what our newspapers will call, if they ever care to notice him, a level-headed business man. At the sight of the gold piece Morano bowed, for he felt this gift of gold to be an occasion; but he trusted more for the purchase of the bacon to some few small silver coins of his own that he kept among lumps of lard and pieces of string.

And so they parted for a while, Rodriguez looking for some great shadowy oak with moss under it near a stream, Morano in quest of bacon.

When Rodriguez entered the wood he found his oak, but it was not such an oak as he cared to rest beneath during the heat of the day, nor would you have done so, my reader, even though you have been to the wars and seen many a pretty mess; for four of la Garda were by it and were arranging to hang a man from the best of the branches.

"La Garda again," said Rodriguez nearly aloud.

His eye drooped, his look was listless, he gazed at other things; while a glance that you had not noticed, flashed slantingly at la Garda, satisfied Rodriguez that all four were strangers: then he walked straight towards them merrily. The man they proposed to hang was a stranger too. He appeared at first to be as stout as Morano, and he was nearly half a foot taller, but his stoutness turned out to be sheer muscle. The broad man was clothed in old brown leather and had blue eyes.

Now there was something about the poise of Rodriguez' young head which gave him an air not unlike that which the King himself sometimes wore when he went courting. It suited his noble sword and his merry plume. When la Garda saw him they were all politeness at once, and invited him to see the hanging, for which Rodriguez thanked them with amplest courtesy.

"It is not a bull-fight," said the chief of la Garda almost apologetically. But Rodriguez waved aside his deprecations and declared himself charmed at the prospect of a hanging.

Bear with me, reader, while I champion a bad cause and seek to palliate what is inexcusable. As we travel about the world on our way through life we meet and pass here and there, in peace or in war, other men, fellow-travellers: and sometimes there is no more than time for a glance, eye to eye. And in that glance you see the sort of man: and chiefly there are two sorts. The one sort always brooding, always planning; mean, silent men, collecting properties and money; keeping the law on their side, keeping everything on their side; except women and heaven, and the late, leisurely judgment of simple people: and the others merry folk, whose eyes twinkle, whose money flies, who will sooner laugh than plan, who seem to inherit rightfully the happiness that the others plot for, and fail to come by with all their schemes. In the man who was to provide the entertainment Rodriguez recognised the second kind.

Now even though the law had caught a saint that had strayed too far outside the boundary of Heaven, and desired to hang him, Rodriguez knew that it was his duty to help the law while help was needed, and to applaud after the thing was done. The law to Rodriguez was the most sacred thing man had made, if indeed it were not divine; but since the privilege that two days ago had afforded him of studying it more closely, it appeared to him the blindest, silliest thing with which he had had to do since the kittens were drowned that his cat Tabitharina had had at Arguento Harez.

It was in this deplorable state of mind that Rodriguez' glance fell on the merry eyes and the solemn predicament of the man in the leather coat, standing pinioned under a long branch of the oak-tree: and he determined from that moment to disappoint la Garda and, I fear also, my reader, perhaps to disappoint you, of the hanging that they at least had promised themselves.

"Think you," said Rodriguez, "that for so stout a knave this branch of yours suffices?"

Now it was an excellent branch. But it was not so much Rodriguez' words as the anxious way in which he looked at the branch that aroused the anxieties of la Garda: and soon they were looking about to find a better tree; and when four men start doing this in a wood time quickly passes. Meanwhile Morano drew near, and Rodriguez went to meet him.

"Master," said Morano, all out of breath, "they had no bacon. But I got these two bottles of wine. It is strong wine, which is a rare deluder of the senses, which will need to be deluded if we are to go hungry."

Rodriguez was about to cut short Morano's chatter when he thought of a use for the wine, and was silent a moment. And as he pondered Morano looked up and saw la Garda and at the same time perceived the situation, for he had as quick an eye for a bad business as any man.

"No one with the horses," was his comment; for they were tethered a little apart. But Rodriguez' mind had already explored a surer method than the one that Morano seemed to be contemplating. This method he told Morano. And now, from little tugs that they were giving to the doubled rope that hung over the branch of the oak-tree, it was clear enough that the men of the law were returning to their confidence in that very sufficient branch.

They looked up with questions ripe to drop from their lips when they saw Rodriguez returning with Morano. But before one of them spoke Morano flung to them from far off a little piece of his wisdom: for cast a truth into an occasion and it will always trouble the waters, usually stirring up contradiction, but always bringing something to the surface.

"Señores," he said, "no man can enjoy a hanging with a dry throat."

Thus he turned their attention a while from the business in hand, changing their thoughts from the stout neck of the prisoner to their own throats, wondering were they dry; and you do not wonder long about this in the south without finding that what you feared is true. And then he let them see the two great bottles, all full of wine, for the invention of the false

bottom that gives to our champagne-bottles the place they rightly hold among famous deceptions had not as yet been discovered.

"It is true," said la Garda. And Rodriguez made Morano put one of the bottles away in a piece of a sack that he carried: and when la Garda saw one of the two bottles disappear it somehow decided them to have the other, though how this came to be so there is no saying; and thus the hanging was postponed again.

Now the drink was a yellow wine, sweet and heavy and stronger than our port; only our whisky could out-triumph it, but there in the warm south it answered its purpose. Rodriguez beckoned Morano up and offered the bottle to one of la Garda; but scarcely had he put it to his lips when Rodriguez bade him stop, saying that he had had his share. And he did the same with the next man.

Now there be few things indeed which la Garda resent more than meagre hospitality in the matter of drink, and with all their wits striving to cope with this vicious defect in Rodriguez, as they rightly or wrongly regarded it, how should they have any to spare for obvious precautions? As the third man drank, Rodriguez turned to speak to Morano; and the representative of the law took such advantage of an opportunity that he feared to be fleeting, that when Rodriguez turned round again the bottle was just half empty. Rodriguez had timed it very nicely.

Next Rodriguez put the bottle to his lips and held it there a little time, while the fourth man of the law, who was guarding the prisoner, watched Rodriguez wistfully, and afterwards Morano, who took the bottle next. Yet neither Rodriguez nor Morano drank.

"You can finish the bottle," said Rodriguez to this anxious watcher, who came forward eagerly though full of doubts, which changed to warm feelings of exuberant gratitude when he found how much remained. Thus he obtained not much less than two tumblerfuls of wine that, as I have said, was stronger than port; and noon was nearing and it was spring in Spain. And then he returned to guard his prisoner under the oak-tree and lay down there on the moss, remembering that it was his duty to keep awake. And afterwards with one hand he took hold of a rope that bound the prisoner's ankles, so that he might still guard his prisoner even though he should fall asleep.

Now two of the men had had little more than the full of a sherry glass each. To these Morano made signs that there was another bottle, and,

coming round behind his master, he covertly uncorked it and gave them their heart's desire; and a little was left over for the man who drank third on the first occasion. And presently the spirits of all four of la Garda grew haughty and forgot their humble bodies, and would fain have gone forth to dwell with the sons of light, while their bodies lay on the moss and the sun grew warmer and warmer, shining dappled in amongst the small green leaves. All seemed still but for the winged insects flashing through shafts of the sunlight out of the gloom of the trees and disappearing again like infinitesimal meteors. But our concern is with the thoughts of man, of which deeds are but the shadows: wherever these are active it is wrong to say all is still; for whether they cast their shadows, which are actions, or whether they remain a force not visibly stirring matter, they are the source of the tales we write and the lives we lead; it is they that gave History her material and they that bade her work it up into books.

And thoughts were very active about that oak-tree. For while the thoughts of la Garda arose like dawn, and disappeared into mists, their prisoner was silently living through the sunny days of his life, which are at no time quite lost to us, and which flash vivid and bright and near when memory touches them, herself awakened by the nearness of death. He lived again days far from the day that had brought him where he stood. He drew from those days (that is to say) that delight, that essence of hours, that something which we call life. The sun, the wind, the rough sand, the splash of the sea, on the star-fish, and all the things that it feels during its span, are stored in something like its memory, and are what we call its life: it is the same with all of us. Life is feeling. The prisoner from the store of his memory was taking all he had. His head was lifted, he was gazing northwards, far further than his eyes could see, to shining spaces in great woods; and there his threatened being walked in youth, with steps such as spirits take, over immortal flowers, which were dim and faint but unfading because they lived on in memory. In memory he walked with some who were now far from his footsteps. And, seen through the gloaming of that perilous day, how bright did those far days appear! Did they not seem sunnier than they really were? No, reader; for all the radiance that glittered so late in his mind was drawn from those very days; it was their own brightness that was shining now: we are not done with the days that were as soon as their sunsets have faded, but a light remains from them and grows

fairer and fairer, like an afterglow lingering among tremendous peaks above immeasurable slopes of snow.

The prisoner had scarcely noticed Rodriguez or his servant, any more than he noticed his captors; for there come an intensity to those who walk near death that makes them a little alien from other men, life flaring up in them at the last into so grand a flame that the lives of the others seem a little cold and dim where they dwell remote from that sunset that we call mortality. So he looked silently at the days that were as they came dancing back again to him from where they had long lain lost in chasms of time, to which they had slipped over dark edges of years. Smiling they came, but all wistfully anxious, as though their errand were paramount and their span short: he saw them cluster about him, running now, bringing their tiny gifts, and scarcely heard the heavy sigh of his guard as Rodriguez gagged him and Morano tied him up.

Had Rodriguez now released the prisoner they could have been three to three, in the event of things going wrong with the sleep of la Garda; but, since in the same time they could gag and bind another, the odds would be the same at two to two, and Rodriguez preferred this to the slight uncertainties that would be connected with the entry of another partner. They accordingly gagged the next man and bound his wrists and ankles. And that Spanish wine held good with the other two and bound them far down among the deeps of dreams: and so it should, for it was of a vine that grew in the vales of Spain and had ripened in one of the years of the golden age.

They bound one as easily as they had bound the other two; and the last Rodriguez watched while Morano cut the ropes off the prisoner, for he had run out of bits of twine and all other improvisations. With these ropes he ran back to his master, and they tied up the last prisoner but did not gag him.

“Shall we gag him, master, like the rest?” said Morano.

“No,” said Rodriguez. “He has nothing to say.”

And though this remark turned out to be strictly untrue, it well enough answered its purpose.

And then they saw standing before them the man they had freed. And he bowed to Rodriguez like one that had never bowed before. I do not mean that he bowed with awkwardness, like imitative men unused to politeness, but he bowed as the oak bows to the woodman; he stood straight, looking Rodriguez in the eyes, then he bowed as though he had let his spirit break,

which allowed him to bow to never a man before. Thus, if my pen has been able dimly to tell of it, thus bowed the man in the old leathern jacket. And Rodriguez bowed to him in answer with the elegance that they that had dwelt at Arguento Harez had slowly drawn from the ages.

"Señor, your name," said the stranger.

"Lord of Arguento Harez," said Rodriguez.

"Señor," he said, "being a busy man, I have seldom time to pray. And the blessed Saints, being more busy than I, I think seldom hear my prayers: yet your name shall go up to them. I will often tell it them quietly in the forest, and not on their holy days when bells are ringing and loud prayers fill Heaven. It may be ..."

"Señor," Rodriguez said, "I profoundly thank you."

Even in these days, when bullets are often thicker than prayers, we are not quite thankless for the prayers of others: in those days they were what "closing quotations" are on the Stock Exchange, ink in Fleet Street, machinery in the Midlands; common but valued; and Rodriguez' thanks were sincere.

And now that the curses of the ungagged one of la Garda were growing monotonous, Rodriguez turned to Morano.

"Ungag the rest," he said, "and let them talk to each other."

"Master," Morano muttered, feeling that there was enough noise already for a small wood, but he went and did as he was ordered. And Rodriguez was justified of his humane decision, for the pent thoughts of all three found expression together and, all four now talking at once, mitigated any bitterness there may have been in those solitary curses. And now Rodriguez could talk undisturbed.

"Whither?" said the stranger.

"To the wars," said Rodriguez, "if wars there be."

"Aye," said the stranger, "there be always wars somewhere. By which road go you?"

"North," said Rodriguez, and he pointed. The stranger turned his eyes to the way Rodriguez pointed.

"That brings you to the forest," he said, "unless you go far around, as many do."

"What forest?" said Rodriguez.

"The great forest named Shadow Valley," said the stranger.

"How far?" said Rodriguez.

“Forty miles,” said the stranger.

Rodriguez looked at la Garda and then at their horses, and thought. He must be far from la Garda by nightfall.

“It is not easy to pass through Shadow Valley,” said the stranger.

“Is it not?” said Rodriguez.

“Have you a gold great piece?” the stranger said.

Rodriguez held out one of his remaining four: the stranger took it. And then he began to rub it on a stone, and continued to rub while Rodriguez watched in silence, until the image of the lord the King was gone and the face of the coin was scratchy and shiny and flat. And then he produced from a pocket or pouch in his jacket a graving tool with a round wooden handle, which he took in the palm of his hand, and the edge of the steel came out between his forefinger and thumb: and with this he cut at the coin. And Morano rejoined them from his merciful mission and stood and wondered at the cutting. And while he cut they talked.

They did not ask him how he came to be chosen for hanging, because in every country there are about a hundred individualists, varying to perhaps half a hundred in poor ages. They go their hundred ways, or their half-dozen ways; and there is a hundred and first way, or a seventh way, which is the way that is cut for the rest: and if some of the rest catch one of the hundred, or one of the six, they naturally hang him, if they have a rope, and if hanging is the custom of the country, for different countries use different methods. And you saw by this man’s eyes that he was one of the hundred. Rodriguez therefore only sought to know how he came to be caught.

“La Garda found you, señor?” he said.

“As you see,” said the stranger. “I came too far from my home.”

“You were travelling?” said Rodriguez.

“Shopping,” he said.

At this word Morano’s interest awakened wide. “Señor,” he said, “what is the right price for a bottle of this wine that la Garda drink?”

“I know not,” said the man in the brown jacket; “they give me these things.”

“Where is your home, señor?” Rodriguez asked.

“It is Shadow Valley,” he said.

One never saw Rodriguez fail to understand anything: if he could not clear a situation up he did not struggle with it. Morano rubbed his chin: he had heard of Shadow Valley only dimly, for all the travellers he had known

out of the north had gone round it. Rodriguez and Morano bent their heads and watched a design that was growing out of the gold. And as the design grew under the hand of the strange worker he began to talk of the horses. He spoke as though his plans had been clearly established by edict, and as though no others could be.

"When I have gone with two horses," he said, "ride hard with the other two till you reach the village named Lowlight, and take them to the forge of Fernandez the smith, where one will shoe them who is not Fernandez."

And he waved his hand northwards. There was only one road. Then all his attention fell back again to his work on the gold coin; and when those blue eyes were turned away there seemed nothing left to question. And now Rodriguez saw the design was a crown, a plain gold circlet with oak leaves rising up from it. And this woodland emblem stood up out of the gold, for the worker had hollowed the coin away all around it, and was sloping it up to the edge. Little was said by the watchers in the wonder of seeing the work, for no craft is very far from the line beyond which is magic, and the man in the leather coat was clearly a craftsman: and he said nothing for he worked at a craft. And when the arboreal crown was finished, and its edges were straight and sharp, an hour had passed since he began near noon. Then he drilled a hole near the rim and, drawing a thin green ribbon from his pocket, he passed it through the hole and, rising, he suddenly hung it round Rodriguez' neck.

"Wear it thus," he said, "while you go through Shadow Valley."

As he said this he stepped back among the trees, and Rodriguez followed to thank him. Not finding him behind the tree where he thought to find him, he walked round several others, and Morano joined his search; but the stranger had vanished. When they returned again to the little clearing they heard sounds of movement in the wood, and a little way off where the four horses had grazed there were now only two, which were standing there with their heads up.

"We must ride, Morano," said Rodriguez.

"Ride, master?" said Morano dolefully.

"If we walk away," said Rodriguez, "they will walk after us."

"They" meant la Garda. It was unnecessary for him to tell Morano what I thus tell the reader, for in the wood it was hard to hear anyone else, while to think of anyone else was out of the question.

"What shall I do to them, master?" said Morano.

They were now standing close to their captives and this simple question calmed the four men's curses, all of a sudden, like shutting the door on a storm.

"Leave them," Rodriguez said. And la Garda's spirits rose and they cursed again.

"Ah. To die in the wood," said Morano. "No," said Rodriguez; and he walked towards the horses. And something in that "No" sounding almost contemptuous, Morano's feelings were hurt, and he blurted out to his master "But how can they get away to get their food? It is good knots that I tie, master."

"Morano," Rodriguez said, "I remember ten ways in the books of romance whereby bound men untie themselves; and doubtless one or two more I have read and forgot; and there may be other ways in the books that I have not read, besides any way that there be of which no books tell. And in addition to these ways, one of them may draw a comrade's sword with his teeth and thus ..."

"Shall I pull out their teeth?" said Morano.

"Ride," said Rodriguez, for they were now come to the horses. And sorrowfully Morano looked at the horse that was to be his, as a man might look at a small, uncomfortable boat that is to carry him far upon a stormy day. And then Rodriguez helped him into the saddle.

"Can you stay there?" Rodriguez said. "We have far to go."

"Master," Morano answered, "these hands can hold till evening."

And then Rodriguez mounted, leaving Morano gripping the high front of the saddle with his large brown hands. But as soon as the horses started he got a grip with his heels as well, and later on with his knees. Rodriguez led the way on to the straggling road and was soon galloping northwards, while Morano's heels kept his horse up close to his master's. Morano rode as though trained in the same school that some while later taught Macaulay's equestrian, who rode with "loose rein and bloody spur." Yet the miles went swiftly by as they galloped on soft white dust, which lifted and settled, some of it, back on the lazy road, while some of it was breathed by Morano. The gold coin on the green silk ribbon flapped up and down as Rodriguez rode, till he stuffed it inside his clothing and remembered no more about it. Once they saw before them the man they had snatched from the noose: he was going hard and leading a loose horse. And then where the road bent round a low hill he galloped out of sight and they saw him no more. He had

the loose horse to change on to as soon as the other was tired: they had no prospect of overtaking him. And so he passed out of their minds as their host had done who went away with his household to Saragossa.

At first Rodriguez' mandolin, that was always slung on his back, bumped up and down uncomfortably; but he eased it by altering the strap: small things like this bring contentment. And then he settled down to ride. But no contentment came near Morano nor did he look for it. On the first day of his wanderings he had worn his master's clothes, which has been an experience standing somewhat where toothache does, which is somewhere about half-way between discomfort and agony. On the second day he had climbed at the end of a weary journey over those sharp rocks whose shape was adapted so ill to his body. On the third day he was riding. He did not look for comfort. But he met discomfort with an easy resignation that almost defeated the intention of Satan who sends it, unless — as is very likely — it be from Heaven. And in spite of all discomforts he gaily followed Rodriguez. In a thousand days at the Inn of the Dragon and Knight no two were so different to Morano that one stood out from the other, or any from the rest. It was all as though one day were repeated again and again; and at some point in this monotonous repetition, like a milestone shaped as the rest on a perfectly featureless road, life would end and the meaningless repetition stop: and looking back on it there would only be one day to see, or, if he could not look back, it would be all gone for nothing. And then, into that one day that he was living on in the gloaming of that grim inn, Rodriguez had appeared, and Morano had known him for one of those wandering lights that sometimes make sudden day among the stars. He knew — no, he felt — that by following him, yesterday today and tomorrow would be three separate possessions in memory. Morano gladly gave up that one dull day he was living for the new strange days through which Rodriguez was sure to lead him. Gladly he left it: if this be not true how then has a man with a dream led thousands to follow his fancy, from the Crusades to whatever gay madness be the fashion when this is read? As they galloped the scent of the flowers rushed into Rodriguez' nostrils, while Morano mainly breathed the dust from the hooves of his master's horse. But the quest was favoured the more by the scent of the flowers inspiring its leader's fancies. So Morano gained even from this.

In the first hour they shortened by fifteen miles the length of their rambling quest. In the next hour they did five miles; and in the third hour

ten. After this they rode slowly. The sun was setting. Morano regarded the sunset with delight, for it seemed to promise jovially the end of his sufferings, which except for brief periods when they went on foot, to rest — as Rodriguez said — the horses, had been continuous and even increasing since they started. Rodriguez, perhaps a little weary too, drew from the sunset a more sombre feeling, as sensitive minds do: he responded to its farewell, he felt its beauty, and as little winds turned cool and the shine of blades of grass faded, making all the plain dimmer, he heard, or believed he heard, further off than he could see, sounds on the plain beyond ridges, in hollows, behind clumps of bushes; as though small creatures all unknown to his learning played instruments cut from reeds upon unmapped streams. In this hour, among these fancies, Rodriguez saw clear on a hill the white walls of the village of Lowlight. And now they began to notice that a great round moon was shining. The sunset grew dimmer and the moonlight stole in softly, as a cat might walk through great doors on her silent feet into a throne-room just as the king had gone: and they entered the village slowly in the perfect moment of twilight.

The round horizon was brimming with a pale but magical colour, welling up to the tips of trees and the battlements of white towers. Earth seemed a mysterious cup overfull of this pigment of wonder. Clouds wandering low, straying far from their azure fields, were dipped in it. The towers of Lowlight turned slowly rose in that light, and glowed together with the infinite gloaming, so that for this brief hour the things of man were wed with the things of eternity. It was into this wide, pale flame of aetherial rose that the moon came stealing like a magician on tip-toe, to enchant the tips of the trees, low clouds and the towers of Lowlight. A blue light from beyond our world touched the pink that is Earth's at evening: and what was strange and a matter for hushed voices, marvellous but yet of our earth, became at that touch unearthly. All in a moment it was, and Rodriguez gasped to see it. Even Morano's eyes grew round with the coming of wonder, or with some dim feeling that an unnoticed moment had made all things strange and new.

For some moments the spell of moonlight on sunlight hovered: the air was brimming and quivering with it: magic touched earth. For some moments, some thirty beats of a heron's wing, had the angels sung to men, had their songs gone earthward into that rosy glow, gliding past layers of faintly tinted cloud, like moths at dusk towards a briar-rose; in those few

moments men would have known their language. Rodriguez reined in his horse in the heavy silence and waited. For what he waited he knew not: some unearthly answer perhaps to his questioning thoughts that had wandered far from earth, though no words came to him with which to ask their question and he did not know what question they would ask. He was all vibrating with the human longing: I know not what it is, but perhaps philosophers know. He sat there waiting while a late bird sailed homeward, sat while Morano wondered. And nothing spake from anywhere.

And now a dog began to notice the moon: now a child cried suddenly that had been dragged back from the street, where it had wandered at bedtime: an old dog rose from where it had lain in the sun and feebly yet confidently scratched at a door: a cat peered round a corner: a man spoke: Rodriguez knew there would be no answer now.

Rodriguez hit his horse, the tired animal went forward, and he and Morano rode slowly up the street.

Dona Serafina of the Valley of Dawnlight had left the heat of the room that looked on the fields, and into which the sun had all day been streaming, and had gone at sunset to sit in the balcony that looked along the street. Often she would do this at sunset; but she rather dreamed as she sat there than watched the street, for all that it had to show she knew without glancing. Evening after evening as soon as winter was over the neighbour would come from next door and stretch himself and yawn and sit on a chair by his doorway, and the neighbour from opposite would saunter across the way to him, and they would talk with eagerness of the sale of cattle, and sometimes, but more coldly, of the affairs of kings. She knew, but cared not to know, just when the two old men would begin their talk. She knew who owned every dog that stretched itself in the dust until chilly winds blew in the dusk and they rose up dissatisfied. She knew the affairs of that street like an old, old lesson taught drearily, and her thoughts went far away to vales of an imagination where they met with many another maiden fancy, and they all danced there together through the long twilight in Spring. And then her mother would come and warn her that the evening grew cold, and Serafina would turn from the mystery of evening into the house and the candle-light. This was so evening after evening all through spring and summer for two long years of her youth. And then, this evening, just as the two old neighbours began to discuss whether or not the subjugation of the entire world by Spain would be for its benefit, just as one of the dogs in the

road was rising slowly to shake itself, neighbours and dogs all raised their heads to look, and there was Rodriguez riding down the street and Morano coming behind him. When Serafina saw this she brought her eyes back from dreams, for she dreamed not so deeply but that the cloak and plume of Rodriguez found some place upon the boundaries of her day-dream. When she saw the way he sat his horse and how he carried his head she let her eyes flash for a little moment along the street from her balcony. And if some critical reader ask how she did it I answer, "My good sir, I can't tell you, because I don't know," or "My dear lady, what a question to ask!" And where she learned to do it I cannot think, but nothing was easier. And then she smiled to think that she had done the very thing that her mother had warned her there was danger in doing.

"Serafina," her mother said in that moment at the large window, "the evening grows cold. It might be dangerous to stay there longer." And Serafina entered the house, as she had done at the coming of dusk on many an evening.

Rodriguez missed as much of that flash of her eyes, shot from below the darkness of her hair, as youth in its first glory and freedom misses. For at the point on the road called life at which Rodriguez was then, one is high on a crag above the promontories of watchmen, lower only than the peaks of the prophets, from which to see such things. Yet it did not need youth to notice Serafina. Beggars had blessed her for the poise of her head.

She turned that head a little as she went between the windows, till Rodriguez gazing up to her saw the fair shape of her neck: and almost in that moment the last of the daylight died. The windows shut; and Rodriguez rode on with Morano to find the forge that was kept by Fernandez the smith. And presently they came to the village forge, a cottage with huge, high roof whose beams were safe from sparks; and its fire was glowing redly into the moonlight through the wide door made for horses, although there seemed no work to be done, and a man with a swart moustache was piling more logs on. Over the door was burned on oak in ungainly great letters —

"FERNANDEZ"

"For whom do you seek, señor?" he said to Rodriguez, who had halted before him with his horse's nose inside the doorway sniffing.

"I look," he said, "for him who is not Fernandez."

"I am he," said the man by the fire.

Rodriguez questioned no further but dismounted, and bade Morano lead the horses in. And then he saw in the dark at the back of the forge the other two horses that he had seen in the wood. And they were shod as he had never seen horses shod before. For the front pair of shoes were joined by a chain riveted stoutly to each, and the hind pair also; and both horses were shod alike. The method was equally new to Morano. And now the man with the swart moustache picked up another bunch of horseshoes hanging in pairs on chains. And Rodriguez was not far out when he guessed that whenever la Garda overtook their horses they would find that Fernandez was far away making holiday, while he who shod them now would be gone upon other business. And all this work seemed to Rodriguez not to be his affair.

"Farewell," he said to the smith that was not Fernandez; and with a pat for his horse he left it, having obtained a promise of oats. And so Rodriguez and Morano went on foot again, Morano elated in spite of fatigue and pain, rejoicing to feel the earth once more, flat under the soles of his feet; Rodriguez a little humbled.

THE SIXTH CHRONICLE

HOW HE SANG TO HIS MANDOLIN AND WHAT CAME OF HIS SINGING

They walked back slowly in silence up the street down which they had ridden. Earth darkened, the moon grew brighter: and Rodriguez gazing at the pale golden disk began to wonder who dwelt in the lunar valleys; and what message, if folk were there, they had for our peoples; and in what language such message could ever be, and how it could fare across that limpid remoteness that wafted light on to the coasts of Earth and lapped in silence on the lunar shores. And as he wondered he thought of his mandolin.

"Morano," he said, "buy bacon."

Morano's eyes brightened: they were forty-five miles from the hills on which he had last tasted bacon. He selected his house with a glance, and then he was gone. And Rodriguez reflected too late that he had forgotten to tell Morano where he should find him, and this with night coming on in a strange village. Scarcely, Rodriguez reflected, he knew where he was going himself. Yet if old tunes lurking in its hollows, echoing though imperceptibly from long-faded evenings, gave the mandolin any knowledge of human affairs that other inanimate things cannot possess, the mandolin knew.

Let us in fancy call up the shade of Morano from that far generation. Let us ask him where Rodriguez is going. Those blue eyes, dim with the distance over which our fancy has called them, look in our eyes with wonder.

"I do not know," he says, "where Don Rodriguez is going. My master did not tell me."

Did he notice nothing as they rode by that balcony?

"Nothing," Morano answers, "except my master riding."

We may let Morano's shade drift hence again, for we shall discover nothing: nor is this an age to which to call back spirits.

Rodriguez strolled slowly on the deep dust of that street as though wondering all the while where he should go; and soon he and his mandolin were below that very balcony whereon he had seen the white neck of

Serafina gleam with the last of the daylight. And now the spells of the moon charmed Earth with their full power.

The balcony was empty. How should it have been otherwise? And yet Rodriguez grieved. For between the vision that had drawn his footsteps and that bare balcony below shuttered windows was the difference between a haven, sought over leagues of sea, and sheer, uncharted cliff. It brought a wistfulness into the music he played, and a melancholy that was all new to Rodriguez, yet often and often before had that mandolin sent up through evening against unheeding Space that cry that man cannot utter; for the spirit of man needs a mandolin as a comrade to face the verdict of the chilly stars as he needs a bulldog for more mundane things.

Soon out of the depth of that stout old mandolin, in which so many human sorrows had spun tunes out of themselves, as the spiders spin misty grey webs, till it was all haunted with music, soon the old cry went up to the stars again, a thread of supplication spun of the matter which else were distilled in tears, beseeching it knew not what. And, but that Fate is deaf, all that man asks in music had been granted then.

What sorrows had Rodriguez known in his life that he made so sad a melody? I know not. It was the mandolin. When the mandolin was made it knew at once all the sorrows of man, and all the old unnamed longings that none defines. It knew them as the dog knows the alliance that its forefathers made with man. A mandolin weeps the tears that its master cannot shed, or utters the prayers that are deeper than its master's lips can draw, as a dog will fight for his master with teeth that are longer than man's. And if the moonlight streamed on untroubled, and though Fate was deaf, yet beauty of those fresh strains going starward from under his fingers touched at least the heart of Rodriguez and gilded his dreams and gave to his thoughts a mournful autumnal glory, until he sang all newly as he never had sung before, with limpid voice along the edge of tears, a love-song old as the woods of his father's valleys at whose edge he had heard it once drift through the evening. And as he played and sang with his young soul in the music he fancied (and why not, if they care aught for our souls in Heaven?) he fancied the angles putting their hands each one on a star and leaning out of Heaven through the constellations to listen.

"A vile song, señor, and a vile tune with it," said a voice quite close.

However much the words hurt his pride in his mandolin Rodriguez recognised in the voice the hidalgo's accent and knew that it was an equal

that now approached him in the moonlight round a corner of the house with the balcony; and he knew that the request he courteously made would be as courteously granted.

"Señor," he said, "I pray you to permit me to lean my mandolin against the wall securely before we speak of my song."

"Most surely, señor," the stranger replied, "for there is no fault with the mandolin."

"Señor," Rodriguez said, "I thank you profoundly." And he bowed to the gallant, whom he now perceived to be young, a youth tall and lithe like himself, one whom we might have chosen for these chronicles had we not found Rodriguez.

Then Rodriguez stepped back a short way and placed his kerchief on the ground; and upon this he put his mandolin and leaned it against the wall. When the mandolin was safe from dust or accident he approached the stranger and drew his sword.

"Señor," he said, "we will now discuss music."

"Right gladly, señor," said the young man, who now drew his sword also. There were no clouds; the moon was full; the evening promised well.

Scarcely had the flash of thin rapiers crossing each other by moonlight begun to gleam in the street when Morano appeared beside them and stood there watching. He had bought his bacon and gone straight to the house with the balcony. For though he knew no Latin he had not missed the silent greeting that had welcomed his master to that village, or failed to interpret the gist of the words that Rodriguez' dumb glance would have said. He stood there watching while each combatant stood his ground.

And Rodriguez remembered all those passes and feints that he had had from his father, and which Sevastiani, a master of arms in Madrid, had taught in his father's youth: and some were famous and some were little known. And all these passes, as he tried them one by one, his unknown antagonist parried. And for a moment Rodriguez feared that Morano would see those passes in which he trusted foiled by that unknown sword, and then he reflected that Morano knew nothing of the craft of the rapier, and with more content at that thought he parried thrusts that were strange to him. But something told Morano that in this fight the stranger was master and that along that pale-blue, moonlit, unknown sword lurked a sure death for Rodriguez. He moved from his place of vantage and was soon lost in large shadows; while the rapiers played and blade rippled on blade with a sound

as though Death were gently sharpening his scythe in the dark. And now Rodriguez was giving ground, now his antagonist pressed him; thrusts that he believed invincible had failed; now he parried wearily and had at once to parry again; the unknown pressed on, was upon him, was scattering his weakening parries; drew back his rapier for a deadlier pass, learned in a secret school, in a hut on mountains he knew, and practised surely; and fell in a heap upon Rodriguez' feet, struck full on the back of the head by Morano's frying-pan.

"Most vile knave," shouted Rodriguez as he saw Morano before him with his frying-pan in his hand, and with something of the stupid expression that you see on the face of a dog that has done some foolish thing which it thinks will delight its master.

"Master! I am your servant," said Morano.

"Vile, miserable knave," replied Rodriguez.

"Master," Morano said plaintively, "shall I see to your comforts, your food, and not to your life?"

"Silence," thundered Rodriguez as he stooped anxiously to his antagonist, who was not unconscious but only very giddy and who now rose to his feet with the help of Rodriguez.

"Alas, señor," said Rodriguez, "the foul knave is my servant. He shall be flogged. He shall be flayed. His vile flesh shall be cut off him. Does the hurt pain you, señor? Sit and rest while I beat the knave, and then we will continue our meeting."

And he ran to his kerchief on which rested his mandolin and laid it upon the dust for the stranger.

"No, no," said he. "My head clears again. It is nothing."

"But rest, señor, rest," said Rodriguez. "It is always well to rest before an encounter. Rest while I punish the knave."

And he led him to where the kerchief lay on the ground. "Let me see the hurt, señor," he continued. And the stranger removed his plumed hat as Rodriguez compelled him to sit down. He straightened out the hat as he sat, and the hurt was shown to be of no great consequence.

"The blessed Saints be praised," Rodriguez said. "It need not stop our encounter. But rest awhile, señor."

"Indeed, it is nothing," he answered.

"But the indignity is immeasurable," sighed Rodriguez. "Would you care, señor, when you are well rested to give the chastisement yourself?"

“As far as that goes,” said the stranger, “I can chastise him now.”

“If you are fully recovered, señor,” Rodriguez said, “my own sword is at your disposal to beat him sore with the flat of it, or how you will. Thus no dishonour shall touch your sword from the skin of so vile a knave.”

The stranger smiled: the idea appealed to him.

“You make a noble amend, señor,” he said as he bowed over Rodriguez’ proffered sword.

Morano had not moved far, but stood near, wondering. “What should a servant do if not work for his master?” he wondered. And how work for him when dead? And dead, as it seemed to Morano, through his own fault if he allowed any man to kill him when he perceived him about to do so. He stood there puzzled. And suddenly he saw the stranger coming angrily towards him in the clear moonlight with a sword. Morano was frightened.

As the hidalgo came up to him he stretched out his left hand to seize Morano by the shoulder. Up went the frying-pan, the stranger parried, but against a stroke that no school taught or knew, and for the second time he went down in the dust with a reeling head. Rodriguez turned toward Morano and said to him ... No, realism is all very well, and I know that my duty as author is to tell all that happened, and I could win mighty praise as a bold, unconventional writer; at the same time, some young lady will be reading all this next year in some far country, or in twenty years in England, and I would sooner she should not read what Rodriguez said. I do not, I trust, disappoint her. But the gist of it was that he should leave that place now and depart from his service for ever. And hearing those words Morano turned mournfully away and was at once lost in the darkness. While Rodriguez ran once more to help his fallen antagonist. “Señor, señor,” he said with an emotion that some wearing centuries and a cold climate have taught us not to show, and beyond those words he could find no more to say.

“Giddy, only giddy,” said the stranger.

A tear fell on his forehead as Rodriguez helped him to his feet.

“Señor,” Rodriguez said fervently, “we will finish our encounter come what may. The knave is gone and ...”

“But I am somewhat giddy,” said the other.

“I will take off one of my shoes,” said Rodriguez, “leaving the other on. It will equalise our unsteadiness, and you shall not be disappointed in our encounter. Come,” he added kindly.

“I cannot see so clearly as before,” the young hidalgo murmured.

“I will bandage my right eye also,” said Rodriguez, “and if this cannot equalise it ...”

“It is a most fair offer,” said the young man.

“I could not bear that you should be disappointed of your encounter,” Rodriguez said, “by this spirit of Hell that has got itself clothed in fat and dares to usurp the dignity of man.”

“It is a right fair offer,” the young man said again.

“Rest yourself, señor,” said Rodriguez, “while I take off my shoe,” and he indicated his kerchief which was still on the ground.

The stranger sat down a little wearily, and Rodriguez sitting upon the dust took off his left shoe. And now he began to think a little wistfully of the face that had shone from that balcony, where all was dark now in black shadow unlit by the moon. The emptiness of the balcony and its darkness oppressed him; for he could scarcely hope to survive an encounter with that swordsman, whose skill he now recognised as being of a different class from his own, a class of which he knew nothing. All his own feints and passes were known, while those of his antagonist had been strange and new, and he might well have even others. The stranger’s giddiness did not alter the situation, for Rodriguez knew that his handicap was fair and even generous. He believed he was near his grave, and could see no spark of light to banish that dark belief; yet more chances than we can see often guard us on such occasions. The absence of Serafina saddened him like a sorrowful sunset.

Rodriguez rose and limped with his one shoe off to the stranger, who was sitting upon his kerchief.

“I will bandage my right eye now, señor,” he said.

The young man rose and shook the dust from the kerchief and gave it to Rodriguez with a renewed expression of his gratitude at the fairness of the strange handicap. When Rodriguez had bandaged his eye the stranger returned his sword to him, which he had held in his hand since his effort to beat Morano, and drawing his own stepped back a few paces from him. Rodriguez took one hopeless look at the balcony, saw it as empty and as black as ever, then he faced his antagonist, waiting.

“Bandage one eye, indeed!” muttered Morano as he stepped up behind the stranger and knocked him down for the third time with a blow over the head from his frying-pan.

The young hidalgo dropped silently.

Rodriguez uttered one scream of anger and rushed at Morano with his sword. Morano had already started to run; and, knowing well that he was running for his life, he kept for awhile the start that he had of the rapier. Rodriguez knew that no plump man of over forty could last against his lithe speed long. He saw Morano clearly before him, then lost sight of him for a moment and ran confidently on pursuing. He ran on and on. And at last he recognised that Morano had slipped into the darkness, which lies always so near to the moonlight, and was not in front of him at all. So he returned to his fallen antagonist and found him breathing heavily where he fell, scarcely conscious. The third stroke of the frying-pan had done its work surely. Rodriguez' fury died down, only because it is difficult to feel two emotions at once: it died down as pity took its place, though every now and then it would suddenly flare and fall again. He returned his sword and lifted the young hidalgo and carried him to the door of the house under which they had fought.

With one fist he beat on the door without putting the hurt man down, and continued to hit it until steps were heard, and bolts began to grumble, as though disturbed too early from their rusty sleep in stone sockets.

The door of the house with the balcony was opened by a servant who, when he saw who it was that Rodriguez carried, fled into the house in alarm, as one who runs with bad news. He carried one candle and, when he had disappeared with the steaming flame, Rodriguez found himself in a long hall lit by the moonlight only, which was looking in through the small contorted panes of the upper part of a high window. Alone with echoes and shadows Rodriguez carried the hurt man through the hall, who was muttering now as he came back to consciousness. And, as he went, there came to Rodriguez thoughts between wonder and hope, for he had had no thought at all when he beat on the door except to get shelter and help for the hurt man. At the end of the hall they came to an open door that led into a chamber partly shining with moonlight.

"In there," said the man that he carried.

Rodriguez carried him in and laid him on a long couch at the end of the room. Large pictures of men in the blackness, out of the moon's rays, frowned at Rodriguez mysteriously. He could not see their faces in the darkness, but he somehow knew they frowned. Two portraits that were clear in the moonlight eyed him with absolute apathy. So cold a welcome from

that house's past generations boded no good to him from those that dwelt there today. Rodriguez knew that in carrying the hurt man there he helped at a Christian deed; and yet there was no putting the merits of the case against the omens that crowded the chamber, lurking along the edge of moonlight and darkness, disappearing and reappearing till the gloom was heavy with portent. The omens knew. In a weak voice and few words the hurt man thanked him, but the apathetic faces seemed to say What of that? And the frowning faces that he could not see still filled the darkness with anger.

And then from the end of the chamber, dressed in white, and all shining with moonlight, came Serafina.

Rodriguez in awed silence watched her come. He saw her pass through the moonlight and grow dimmer, and glide to the moonlight again that streamed through another window. A great dim golden circle appeared at the far end of the chamber whence she had come, as the servant returned with his candle and held it high to give light for Dona Serafina. But that one flame seemed to make the darkness only blacker; and for any cheerfulness it brought to the gloom it had better never have challenged those masses of darkness at all in that high chamber among the brooding portraits it seemed trivial, ephemeral, modern, ill able to cope with the power of ancient things, dead days and forgotten voices, which make their home in the darkness because the days that have usurped them have stolen the light of the sun.

And there the man stood holding his candle high, and the rays of the moon became more magical still beside that little mundane, flickering thing. And Serafina was moving through the moonlight as though its rays were her sisters, which she met noiselessly and brightly upon some island, as it seemed to Rodriguez, beyond the coasts of Earth, so quietly and so brightly did her slender figure move and so aloof from him appeared her eyes. And there came on Rodriguez that feeling that some deride and that others explain away, the feeling of which romance is mainly made and which is the aim and goal of all the earth. And his love for Serafina seemed to him not only to be an event in his life but to have some part in veiled and shadowy destinies and to have the blessing of most distant days: grey beards seemed to look out of graves in forgotten places to wag approval: hands seemed to beckon to him out of far-future times, where faces were smiling quietly: and, dreaming on further still, this vast approval that gave benediction to his heart's youthful fancy seemed to widen and widen like the gold of a summer's evening or, the humming of bees in summer in

endless rows of limes, until it became a part of the story of man. Spring days of his earliest memory seemed to have their part in it, as well as wonderful evenings of days that were yet to be, till his love for Serafina was one with the fate of earth; and, wandering far on their courses, he knew that the stars blessed it. But Serafina went up to the man on the couch with no look for Rodriguez.

With no look for Rodriguez she bent over the stricken hidalgo. He raised himself a little on one elbow. “It is nothing,” he said, “Serafina.”

Still she bent over him. He laid his head down again, but now with open and undimmed eyes. She put her hand to his forehead, she spoke in a low voice to him; she lavished upon him sympathy for which Rodriguez would have offered his head to swords; and all, thought Rodriguez for three blows from a knave’s frying-pan: and his anger against Morano flared up again fiercely. Then there came another thought to him out of the shadows, where Serafina was standing all white, a figure of solace. Who was this man who so mysteriously blended with the other unknown things that haunted the gloom of that chamber? Why had he fought him at night? What was he to Serafina? Thoughts crowded up to him from the interior of the darkness, sombre and foreboding as the shadows that nursed them. He stood there never daring to speak to Serafina; looking for permission to speak, such as a glance might give. And no glance came.

And now, as though soothed by her beauty, the hurt man closed his eyes. Serafina stood beside him anxious and silent, gleaming in that dim place. The servant at the far end of the chamber still held his one candle high, as though some light of earth were needed against the fantastic moon, which if unopposed would give everything over to magic. Rodriguez stood there, scarcely breathing. All was silent. And then through the door by which Serafina had come, past that lonely, golden, moon-defying candle, all down the long room across moonlight and blackness, came the lady of the house, Serafina’s mother. She came, as Serafina came, straight toward the man on the couch, giving no look to Rodriguez, walking something as Serafina walked, with the same poise, the same dignity, though the years had carried away from her the grace Serafina had: so that, though you saw that they were mother and daughter, the elder lady called to mind the lovely things of earth, large gardens at evening, statues dim in the dusk, summer and whatsoever binds us to earthly things; but Serafina turned Rodriguez’ thoughts to the twilight in which he first saw her, and he pictured her native

place as far from here, in mellow fields near the moon, wherein she had walked on twilight outlasting any we know, with all delicate things of our fancy, too fair for the rugged earth.

As the lady approached the couch upon which the young man was lying, and still no look was turned towards Rodriguez, his young dreams fled as butterflies sailing high in the heat of June that are suddenly plunged in night by a total eclipse of the sun. He had never spoken to Serafina, or seen before her mother, and they did not know his name; he knew that he, Rodriguez, had no claim to a welcome. But his dreams had flocked so much about Serafina's face, basking so much in her beauty, that they now fell back dying; and when a man's dreams die what remains, if he lingers awhile behind them?

Rodriguez suddenly felt that his left shoe was off and his right eye still bandaged, things that he had not noticed while his only thought was for the man he carried to shelter, but torturing his consciousness now that he thought of himself. He opened his lips to explain; but before words came to him, looking at the face of Serafina's mother, standing now by the couch, he felt that, not knowing how, he had somehow wronged the Penates of this house, or whatever was hid in the dimness of that long chamber, by carrying in this young man there to rest from his hurt.

Rodriguez' depression arose from these causes, but having arisen, it grew of its own might: he had had nothing to eat since morning, and in the favouring atmosphere of hunger his depression grew gigantic. He opened his lips once more to say farewell, was oppressed by all manner of thoughts that held him dumb, and turned away in silence and left the house. Outside he recovered his mandolin and his shoe. He was tired with the weariness of defeated dreams that slept in his spirit exhausted, rather than with any fatigue his young muscles had from the journey. He needed sleep; he looked at the shuttered houses; then at the soft dust of the road in which dogs lay during the daylight. But the dust was near to his mood, so he lay down where he had fought the unknown hidalgo. A light wind wandered the street like a visitor come to the village out of a friendly valley, but Rodriguez' four days on the roads had made him familiar with all wandering things, and the breeze on his forehead troubled him not at all: before it had wearied of wandering in the night Rodriguez had fallen asleep. Just by the edge of sleep, upon which side he knew not, he heard the window of the balcony creak, and looked up wide awake all in a moment. But nothing stirred in the

darkness of the balcony and the window was fast shut. So whatever sound came from the window came not from its opening but shutting: for a while he wondered; and then his tired thoughts rested, and that was sleep.

A light rain woke Rodriguez, drizzling upon his face; the first light rain that had fallen in a romantic tale. Storms there had been, lashing oaks to terrific shapes seen at night by flashes of lightning, through which villains rode abroad or heroes sought shelter at midnight; hurricanes there had been, flapping huge cloaks, fierce hail and copious snow; but until now no drizzle. It was morning; dawn was old; and pale and grey and unhappy.

The balcony above him, still empty, scarcely even held romance now. Rain dripped from it sadly. Its cheerless bareness seemed worse than the most sinister shadows of night.

And then Rodriguez saw a rose lying on the ground beside him. And for all the dreams, fancies, and hopes that leaped up in Rodriguez' mind, rising and falling and fading, one thing alone he knew and all the rest was mystery: the rose had lain there before the rain had fallen. Beneath the rose was white dust, while all around it the dust was turning grey with rain.

Rodriguez tried to guess how long the rain had fallen. The rose may have lain beside him all night long. But the shadows of mystery receded no farther than this one fact that the rose was there before the rain began. No sign of any kind came from the house.

Rodriguez put the rose safe under his coat, wrapped in the kerchief that had guarded the mandolin, to carry it far from Lowlight, through places familiar with roses and places strange to them; but it remained for him a thing of mystery until a day far from then.

Sadly he left the house in the sad rain, marching away alone to look for his wars.

THE SEVENTH CHRONICLE

HOW HE CAME TO SHADOW VALLEY

Rodriguez still believed it to be the duty of any Christian man to kill Morano. Yet, more than comfort, more than dryness, he missed Morano's cheerful chatter, and his philosophy into which all occasions so easily slipped. Upon his first day's journey all was new; the very anemones kept him company; but now he made the discovery that lonely roads are long.

When he had suggested food or rest Morano had fallen in with his wishes; when he had suggested winning a castle in vague wars Morano had agreed with him. Now he had dismissed Morano and had driven him away at the rapier's point. There was no one now either to cook his food or to believe in the schemes his ambition made. There was no one now to speak of the wars as the natural end of the journey. Alone in the rain the wars seemed far away and castles hard to come by. The unromantic rain in which no dreams thrive fell on and on.

The village of Lowlight was some way behind him, as he went with mournful thoughts through the drizzling rain, when he caught the smell of bacon. He looked for a house but the plain was bare except for small bushes. He looked up wind, which was blowing from the west, whence came the unmistakable smell of bacon: and there was a small fire smoking greyly against a bush; and the fat figure crouching beside it, although the face was averted, was clearly none but Morano. And when Rodriguez saw that he was tenderly holding the infamous frying-pan, the very weapon that had done the accursed deed, then he almost felt righteous anger; but that frying-pan held other memories too, and Rodriguez felt less fury than what he thought he felt. As for killing Morano, Rodriguez believed, or thought he believed, that he was too far from the road for it to be possible to overtake him to mete out his just punishment. As for the bacon, Rodriguez scorned it and marched on down the road. Now one side of the frying-pan was very hot, for it was tilted a little and the lard had run sideways. By tilting it back again slowly Morano could make the fat run back bit by bit over the heated metal, and whenever it did so it sizzled. He now picked up the frying-pan and one log that was burning well and walked parallel with Rodriguez. He was up-wind of him, and whenever the bacon-fat sizzled Rodriguez caught

the smell of it. A small matter to inspire thoughts; but Rodriguez had eaten nothing since the morning before, and ideas surged through his head; and though they began with moral indignation they adapted themselves more and more to hunger, until there came the idea that since his money had bought the bacon the food was rightfully his, and he had every right to eat it wherever he found it. So much can slaves sometimes control the master, and the body rule the brain.

So Rodriguez suddenly turned and strode up to Morano. "My bacon," he said.

"Master," Morano said, for it was beginning to cool, "let me make another small fire."

"Knave, call me not master," said Rodriguez.

Morano, who knew when speech was good, was silent now, and blew on the smouldering end of the log he carried and gathered a handful of twigs and shook the rain off them; and soon had a small fire again, warming the bacon. He had nothing to say which bacon could not say better. And when Rodriguez had finished up the bacon he carefully reconsidered the case of Morano, and there were points in it which he had not thought of before. He reflected that for the execution of knaves a suitable person was provided. He should perhaps give Morano up to la Garda. His next thought was where to find la Garda. And easily enough another thought followed that one, which was that although on foot and still some way behind four of la Garda were trying to find him. Rodriguez' mind, which was looking at life from the point of view of a judge, changed somewhat at this thought. He reflected next that, for the prevention of crime, to make Morano see the true nature of his enormity so that he should never commit it again might after all be as good as killing him. So what we call his better nature, his calmer judgment, decided him now to talk to Morano and not to kill him: but Morano, looking back upon this merciful change, always attributed it to fried bacon.

"Morano," said Rodriguez' better nature, "to offend the laws of Chivalry is to have against you the swords of all true men."

"Master," Morano said, "that were dreadful odds."

"And rightly," said Rodriguez.

"Master," said Morano, "I will keep those laws henceforth. I may cook bacon for you when you are hungry, I may brush the dust from your cloak, I

may see to your comforts. This Chivalry forbids none of that. But when I see anyone trying to kill you, master; why, kill you he must, and welcome."

"Not always," said Rodriguez somewhat curtly, for it struck him that Morano spoke somehow too lightly of sacred things.

"Not always?" asked Morano.

"No," said Rodriguez.

"Master, I implore you tell me," said Morano, "when they may kill you and when they may not, so that I may never offend again."

Rodriguez cast a swift glance at him but found his face so full of puzzled anxiety that he condescended to do what Morano had asked, and began to explain to him the rudiments of the laws of Chivalry.

"In the wars," he said, "you may defend me whoever assails me, or if robbers or any common persons attack me, but if I arrange a meeting with a gentleman, and any knave basely interferes, then is he damned hereafter as well as accursed now; for, the laws of Chivalry being founded on true religion, the penalty for their breach is by no means confined to this world."

"Master," replied Morano thoughtfully, "if I be not damned already I will avoid those fires of Hell; and none shall kill you that you have not chosen to kill you, and those that you choose shall kill you whenever you have a mind."

Rodriguez opened his lips to correct Morano but reflected that, though in his crude and base-born way, he had correctly interpreted the law so far as his mind was able.

So he briefly said "Yes," and rose and returned to the road, giving Morano no order to follow him; and this was the last concession he made to the needs of Chivalry on account of the sin of Morano. Morano gathered up the frying-pan and followed Rodriguez, and when they came to the road he walked behind him in silence.

For three or four miles they walked thus, Morano knowing that he followed on sufferance and calling no attention to himself with his garrulous tongue. But at the end of an hour the rain lifted; and with the coming out of the sun Morano talked again.

"Master," he said, "the next man that you choose to kill you, let him be one too base-born to know the tricks of the rapier, too ignorant to do aught but wish you well, some poor fat fool over forty who shall be too heavy to elude your rapier's point and too elderly for it to matter when you kill him at your Chivalry, the best of life being gone already at forty-five."

“There is timber here,” said Rodriguez. “We will have some more bacon while you dry my cloak over a fire.”

Thus he acknowledged Morano again for his servant but never acknowledged that in Morano’s words he had understood any poor sketch of Morano’s self, or that the words went to his heart.

“Timber, Master?” said Morano, though it did not need Rodriguez to point out the great oaks that now began to stand beside their journey, but he saw that the other matter was well and thus he left well alone.

Rodriguez waved an arm towards the great trees. “Yes, indeed,” said Morano, and began to polish up the frying-pan as he walked.

Rodriguez, who missed little, caught a glimpse of tears in Morano’s eyes, for all that his head was turned downward over the frying-pan; yet he said nothing, for he knew that forgiveness was all that Morano needed, and that he had now given him: and it was much to give, reflected Rodriguez, for so great a crime, and dismissed the matter from his mind.

And now their road dipped downhill, and they passed a huge oak and then another. More and more often now they met these solitary giants, till their view began to be obscured by them. The road dwindled till it was no better than a track, the earth beside it was wild and rocky; Rodriguez wondered to what manner of land he was coming. But continually the branches of some tree obscured his view and the only indication he had of it was from the road he trod, which seemed to tell him that men came here seldom. Beyond every huge tree that they passed as they went downhill Rodriguez hoped to get a better view, but always there stood another to close the vista. It was some while before he realised that he had entered a forest. They were come to Shadow Valley.

The grandeur of this place, penetrated by shafts of sunlight, coloured by flashes of floating butterflies, filled by the chaunt of birds rising over the long hum of insects, lifted the fallen spirits of Rodriguez as he walked on through the morning.

He still would not have exchanged his rose for the whole forest; but in the mighty solemnity of the forest his mourning for the lady that he feared he had lost no longer seemed the only solemn thing: indeed, the sombre forest seemed well attuned to his mood; and what complaint have we against Fate wherever this is so. His mood was one of tragic loss, the defeat of an enterprise that his hopes had undertaken, to seize victory on the apex of the world, to walk all his days only just outside the edge of Paradise, for

no less than that his hopes and his first love promised each other; and then he walked despairing in small rain. In this mood Fate had led him to solemn old oaks standing huge among shadows; and the grandeur of their grey grip on the earth that had been theirs for centuries was akin to the grandeur of the high hopes he had had, and his despair was somehow soothed by the shadows. And then the impudent birds seemed to say "Hope again."

They walked for miles into the forest and lit a fire before noon, for Rodriguez had left Lowlight very early. And by it Morano cooked bacon again and dried his master's cloak. They ate the bacon and sat by the fire till all their clothes were dry, and when the flames from the great logs fell and only embers glowed they sat there still, with hands spread to the warmth of the embers; for to those who wander a fire is food and rest and comfort. Only as the embers turned grey did they throw earth over their fire and continue their journey. Their road grew smaller and the forest denser.

They had walked some miles from the place where they lit their fire, when a somewhat unmistakable sound made Rodriguez look ahead of him. An arrow had struck a birch tree on the right side, ten or twelve paces in front of him; and as he looked up another struck it from the opposite side just level with the first; the two were sticking in it ten feet or so from the ground. Rodriguez drew his sword. But when a third arrow went over his head from behind and struck the birch tree, whut! just between the other two, he perceived, as duller minds could have done, that it was a hint, and he returned his sword and stood still. Morano questioned his master with his eyes, which were asking what was to be done next. But Rodriguez shrugged his shoulders: there was no fighting with an invisible foe that could shoot like that. That much Morano knew, but he did not know that there might not be some law of Chivalry that would demand that Rodriguez should wave his sword in the air or thrust at the birch tree until someone shot him. When there seemed to be no such rule Morano was well content. And presently men came quietly on to the road from different parts of the wood. They were dressed in brown leather and wore leaf-green hats, and round each one's neck hung a disk of engraved copper. They came up to the travellers carrying bows, and the leader said to Rodriguez:

"Señor, all travellers here bring tribute to the King of Shadow Valley," at the mention of whom all touched hats and bowed their heads. "What do you bring us?"

Rodriguez thought of no answer; but after a moment he said, for the sake of loyalty: “I know one king only.”

“There is only one king in Shadow Valley,” said the bowman.

“He brings a tribute of emeralds,” said another, looking at Rodriguez’ scabbard. And then they searched him and others search Morano. There were eight or nine of them, all in their leaf-green hats, with ribbons round their necks of the same colour to hold the copper disks. They took a gold coin from Morano and grey greasy pieces of silver. One of them took his frying-pan; but he looked so pitifully at them as he said simply, “I starve,” that the frying-pan was restored to him.

They unbuckled Rodriguez’ belt and took from him sword and scabbard and three gold pieces from his purse. Next they found the gold piece that was hanging round his neck, still stuffed inside his clothes where he had put it when he was riding. Having examined it they put it back inside his clothes, while the leader rebuckled his sword-belt about his waist and returned him his three gold-pieces.

Others returned his money to Morano. “Master,” said the leader, bowing to Rodriguez, his green hat in hand, “under our King, the forest is yours.”

Morano was pleased to hear this respect paid to his master, but Rodriguez was so surprised that he who was never curt without reason found no more to say than “Why?”

“Because we are your servants,” said the other.

“Who are you?” asked Rodriguez.

“We are the green bowmen, master,” he said, “who hold this forest against all men for our King.”

“And who is he?” said Rodriguez.

And the bowman answered: “The King of Shadow Valley,” at which the others all touched hats and bowed heads again. And Rodriguez seeing that the mystery would grow no clearer for any information to be had from them said: “Conduct me to your king.”

“That, master, we cannot do,” said the chief of the bowmen. “There be many trees in this forest, and behind any one of them he holds his court. When he needs us there is his clear horn. But when men need him who knows which shadow is his of all that lie in the forest?” Whether or not there was anything interesting in the mystery, to Rodriguez it was merely annoying; and finding it grew no clearer he turned his attention to shelter

for the night, to which all travellers give a thought at least once, between noon and sunset.

"Is there any house on this road, señor," he said, "in which we could rest the night?"

"Ten miles from here," said he, "and not far from the road you take is the best house we have in the forest. It is yours, master, for as long as you honour it."

"Come then," said Rodriguez, "and I thank you, señor."

So they all started together, Rodriguez with the leader going in front and Morano following with all the bowmen. And soon the bowmen were singing songs of the forest, hunting songs, songs of the winter; and songs of the long summer evenings, songs of love. Cheered by this merriment, the miles slipped by.

And Rodriguez gathered from the songs they sang something of what they were and of how they lived in the forest, living amongst the woodland creatures till these men's ways were almost as their ways; killing what they needed for food but protecting the woodland things against all others; straying out amongst the villages in summer evenings, and always welcome; and owning no allegiance but to the King of the Shadow Valley.

And the leader told Rodriguez that his name was Miguel Threegeese, given him on account of an exploit in his youth when he lay one night with his bow by one of the great pools in the forest, where the geese come in winter. He said the forest was a hundred miles long, lying mostly along a great valley, which they were crossing. And once they had owned allegiance to kings of Spain, but now to none but the King of the Shadow Valley, for the King of Spain's men had once tried to cut some of the forest down, and the forest was sacred.

Behind him the men sang on of woodland things, and of cottage gardens in the villages: with singing and laughter they came to their journey's end. A cottage as though built by peasants with boundless material stood in the forest. It was a thatched cottage built in the peasant's way but of enormous size. The leader entered first and whispered to those within, who rose and bowed to Rodriguez as he entered, twenty more bowmen who had been sitting at a table. One does not speak of the banqueting-hall of a cottage, but such it appeared, for it occupied more than half of the cottage and was as large as the banqueting-hall of any castle. It was made of great beams of oak, and high at either end just under the thatch were windows with their

little square panes of bulging bluish glass, which at that time was rare in Spain. A table of oak ran down the length of it, cut from a single tree, polished and dark from the hands of many men that had sat at it. Boar spears hung on the wall, great antlers and boar's tusks and, carved in the oak of the wall and again on a high, dark chair that stood at the end of the long table empty, a crown with oak leaves that Rodriguez recognised. It was the same as the one that was cut on his gold coin, which he had given no further thought to, riding to Lowlight, and which the face of Serafina had driven from his mind altogether. "But," he said, and then was silent, thinking to learn more by watching than by talking. And his companions of the road came in and all sat down on the benches beside the ample table, and a brew was brought, a kind of pale mead, that they called forest water. And all drank; and, sitting at the table, watching them more closely than he could as he walked in the forest, Rodriguez saw by the sunlight that streamed in low through one window that on the copper disks they wore round their necks on green ribbon the design was again the same. It was much smaller than his on the gold coin but the same strange leafy crown. "Wear it as you go through Shadow Valley," he now seemed to remember the man saying to him who put it round his neck. But why? Clearly because it was the badge of this band of men. And this other man was one of them.

His eyes strayed back to the great design on the wall. "The crown of the forest," said Miguel as he saw his eyes wondering at it, "as you doubtless know, señor."

Why should he know? Of course because he bore the design himself. "Who wears it?" said Rodriguez.

"The King of Shadow Valley."

Morano was without curiosity; he did not question good drink; he sat at the table with a cup of horn in his hand, as happy as though he had come to his master's castle, though that had not yet been won.

The sun sank under the oaks, filling the hall with a ruddy glow, turning the boar spears scarlet and reddening the red faces of the merry men of the bow.

A dozen of the men went out; to relieve the guard in the forest, Miguel explained. And Rodriguez learned that he had come through a line of sentries without ever seeing one. Presently a dozen others came in from their posts and unslung their bows and laid them on pegs on the wall and sat down at the table. Whereat there were whispered words and they all rose

and bowed to Rodriguez. And Rodriguez had caught the words “A prince of the forest.” What did it mean?

Soon the long hall grew dim, and his love for the light drew Rodriguez out to watch the sunset. And there was the sun under indescribable clouds, turning huge and yellow among the trunks of the trees and casting glory munificently down glades. It set, and the western sky became blood-red and lilac: from the other end of the sky the moon peeped out of night. A hush came and a chill, and a glory of colour, and a dying away of light; and in the hush the mystery of the great oaks became magical. A blackbird blew a tune less of this earth than of fairy-land.

Rodriguez wished that he could have had a less ambition than to win a castle in the wars, for in those glades and among those oaks he felt that happiness might be found under roofs of thatch. But having come by his ambition he would not desert it.

Now rushlights were lit in the great cottage and the window of the long room glowed yellow. A fountain fell in the stillness that he had not heard before. An early nightingale tuned a tentative note. “The forest is fair, is it not?” said Miguel.

Rodriguez had no words to say. To turn into words the beauty that was now shining in his thoughts, reflected from the evening there, was no easier than for wood to reflect all that is seen in the mirror.

“You love the forest,” he said at last.

“Master,” said Miguel, “it is the only land in which we should live our days. There are cities and roads but man is not meant for them. I know not, master, what God intends about us; but in cities we are against the intention at every step, while here, why, we drift along with it.”

“I, too, would live here always,” said Rodriguez.

“The house is yours,” said Miguel. And Rodriguez answered: “I go tomorrow to the wars.”

They turned round then and walked slowly back to the cottage, and entered the candlelight and the loud talk of many men out of the hush of the twilight. But they passed from the room at once by a door on the left, and came thus to a large bedroom, the only other room in the cottage.

“Your room, master,” said Miguel Threegeese.

It was not so big as the hall where the bowmen sat, but it was a goodly room. The bed was made of carved wood, for there were craftsmen in the forest, and a hunt went all the way round it with dogs and deer. Four great

posts held a canopy over it: they were four young birch-trees seemingly still wearing their bright bark, but this had been painted on their bare timber by some woodland artist. The chairs had not the beauty of the great ages of furniture, but they had a dignity that the age of commerce has not dreamed of. Each one was carved out of a single block of wood: there was no join in them anywhere. One of them lasts to this day.

The skins of deer covered the long walls. There were great basins and jugs of earthenware. All was forest-made. The very shadows whispering among themselves in corners spoke of the forest. The room was rude; but being without ornament, except for the work of simple craftsmen, it had nothing there to offend the sense of right of anyone entering its door, by any jarring conflict with the purposes and traditions of the land in which it stood. All the woodland spirits might have entered there, and slept — if spirits sleep — in the great bed, and left at dawn unoffended. In fact that age had not yet learned vulgarity.

When Miguel Threegeese left Morano entered.

"Master," he said, "they are making a banquet for you."

"Good," said Rodriguez. "We will eat it." And he waited to hear what Morano had come to say, for he could see that it was more than this.

"Master," said Morano, "I have been talking with the bowman. And they will give you whatever you ask. They are good people, master, and they will give you all things, whatever you asked of them."

Rodriguez would not show to his servant that it all still puzzled him.

"They are very amiable men," he said.

"Master," said Morano, coming to the point, "that Garda, they will have walked after us. They must be now in Lowlight. They have all to-night to get new shoes on their horses. And to-morrow, master, to-morrow, if we be still on foot..."

Rodriguez was thinking. Morano seemed to him to be talking sense.

"You would like another ride?" he said to Morano.

"Master," he answered, "riding is horrible. But the public garrotter, he is a bad thing too." And he meditatively stroked the bristles under his chin.

"They would give us horses?" said Rodriguez.

"Anything, master, I am sure of it. They are good people."

"They'll have news of the road by which they left Lowlight," said Rodriguez reflectively. "They say la Garda dare not enter the forest,"

Morano continued, “but thirty miles from here the forest ends. They could ride round while we go through.”

“They would give us horses?” said Rodriguez again.

“Surely,” said Morano.

And then Rodriguez asked where they cooked the banquet, since he saw that there were only two rooms in the great cottage and his inquiring eye saw no preparations for cooking about the fireplace of either. And Morano pointed through a window at the back of the room to another cottage among the trees, fifty paces away. A red glow streamed from its windows, growing strong in the darkening forest.

“That is their kitchen, master,” he said. “The whole house is kitchen.” His eyes looked eagerly at it, for, though he loved bacon, he welcomed the many signs of a dinner of boundless variety.

As he and his master returned to the long hall great plates of polished wood were being laid on the table. They gave Rodriguez a place on the right of the great chair that had the crown of the forest carved on the back.

“Whose chair is that?” said Rodriguez.

“The King of Shadow Valley,” they said.

“He is not here then,” said Rodriguez.

“Who knows?” said a bowman.

“It is his chair,” said another; “his place is ready. None knows the ways of the King of Shadow Valley.”

“He comes sometimes at this hour,” said a third, “as the boar comes to Heather Pool at sunset. But not always. None knows his ways.”

“If they caught the King,” said another, “the forest would perish. None loves it as he, none knows its ways as he, no other could so defend it.”

“Alas,” said Miguel, “some day when he be not here they will enter the forest.” All knew whom he meant by they. “And the goodly trees will go.” He spoke as a man foretelling the end of the world; and, as men to whom no less was announced, the others listened to him. They all loved Shadow Valley.

In this man’s time, so they told Rodriguez, none entered the forest to hurt it, no tree was cut except by his command, and venturous men claiming rights from others than him seldom laid axe long to tree before he stood near, stepping noiselessly from among shadows of trees as though he were one of their spirits coming for vengeance on man.

All this they told Rodriguez, but nothing definite they told of their king, where he was yesterday, where he might be now; and any questions he asked of such things seemed to offend a law of the forest.

And then the dishes were carried in, to Morano's great delight: with wide blue eyes he watched the produce of that mighty estate coming in through the doorway cooked. Boars' heads, woodcock, herons, plates full of fishes, all manner of small eggs, a roe-deer and some rabbits, were carried in by procession. And the men set to with their ivory-handled knives, each handle being the whole tusk of a boar. And with their eating came merriment and tales of past huntings and talk of the forest and stories of the King of Shadow Valley.

And always they spoke of him not only with respect but also with the discretion, Rodriguez thought, of men that spoke of one who might be behind them at that moment, and one who tolerated no trifling with his authority. Then they sang songs again, such as Rodriguez had heard on the road, and their merry lives passed clearly before his mind again, for we live in our songs as no men live in histories. And again Rodriguez lamented his hard ambition and his long, vague journey, turning away twice from happiness; once in the village of Lowlight where happiness deserted him, and here in the goodly forest where he jilted happiness. How well could he and Morano live as two of this band, he thought; leaving all cares in cities: for there dwelt cares in cities even then. Then he put the thought away. And as the evening wore away with merry talk and with song, Rodriguez turned to Miguel and told him how it was with la Garda and broached the matter of horses. And while the others sang Miguel spoke sadly to him. "Master," he said, "la Garda shall never take you in Shadow Valley, yet if you must leave us to make your fortune in the wars, though your fortune waits you here, there be many horses in the forest, and you and your servant shall have the best."

"Tomorrow morning, señor?" said Rodriguez.

"Even so," said Miguel.

"And how shall I send them to you again?" said Rodriguez.

"Master, they are yours," said Miguel.

But this Rodriguez would not have, for as yet he only guessed what claim at all he had upon Shadow Valley, his speculations being far more concerned with the identity of the hidalgo that he had fought the night before, how he concerned Serafina, who had owned the rose that he carried:

in fact his mind was busy with such studies as were proper to his age. And at last they decided between them on the house of a lowland smith, who was the furthest man that the bowmen knew who was secretly true to their king. At his house Rodriguez and Morano should leave the horses. He dwelt sixty miles from the northern edge of the forest, and would surely give Rodriguez fresh horses if he possessed them, for he was a true man to the bowman. His name was Gonzalez and he dwelt in a queer green house.

They turned then to listen a moment to a hunting song that all the bowmen were singing about the death of a boar. Its sheer merriment constrained them. Then Miguel spoke again. “You should not leave the forest,” he said sadly.

Rodriguez sighed: it was decided. Then Miguel told him of his road, which ran north-eastward and would one day bring him out of Spain. He told him how towns on the way, and the river Ebro, and with awe and reverence he spoke of the mighty Pyrenees. And then Rodriguez rose, for the start was to be at dawn, and walked quietly through the singing out of the hall to the room where the great bed was. And soon he slept, and his dreams joined in the endless hunt through Shadow Valley that was carved all round the timbers of his bed.

All too soon he heard voices, voices far off at first, to which he drew nearer and nearer; thus he woke grudgingly out of the deeps of sleep. It was Miguel and Morano calling him.

When at length he reached the hall all the merriment of the evening was gone from it but the sober beauty of the forest flooded in through both windows with early sunlight and bird-song; so that it had not the sad appearance of places in which we have rejoiced, when we revisit them next day or next generation and find them all deserted by dance and song.

Rodriguez ate his breakfast while the bowmen waited with their bows all strung by the door. When he was ready they all set off in the early light through the forest.

Rodriguez did not criticise his ambition; it sailed too high above his logic for that; but he regretted it, as he went through the beauty of the forest among these happy men. But we must all have an ambition, and Rodriguez stuck to the one he had. He had another, but it was an ambition with weak wings that could not come to hope. It depended upon the first. If he could win a castle in the wars he felt that he might even yet hope towards Lowlight.

Little was said, and Rodriguez was all alone with his thoughts. In two hours they met a bowman holding two horses. They had gone eight miles.

"Farewell to the forest," said Miguel to Rodriguez. There was almost a query in his voice. Would Rodriguez really leave them? it seemed to say.

"Farewell," he answered.

Morano too had looked sideways towards his master, seeming almost to wonder what his answer would be: when it came he accepted it and walked to the horses. Rodriguez mounted: willing hands helped up Morano. "Farewell," said Miguel once more. And all the bowmen shouted "Farewell."

"Make my farewell," said Rodriguez, "to the King of Shadow Valley."

A twig cracked in the forest.

"Hark," said Miguel. "Maybe that was a boar."

"I cannot wait to hunt," said Rodriguez, "for I have far to go."

"Maybe," said Miguel, "it was the King's farewell to you."

Rodriguez looked into the forest and saw nothing.

"Farewell," he said again. The horses were fresh and he let his go. Morano lumbered behind him. In two miles they came to the edge of the forest and up a rocky hill, and so to the plains again, and one more adventure lay behind them. Rodriguez turned round once on the high ground and took a long look back on the green undulations of peace. The forest slept there as though empty of men.

Then they rode. In the first hour, easily cantering, they did ten miles. Then they settled down to what those of our age and country and occupation know as a hound-jog, which is seven miles an hour. And after two hours they let the horses rest. It was the hour of the frying-pan. Morano, having dismounted, stretched himself dolefully; then he brought out all manner of meats. Rodriguez looked wonderingly at them.

"For the wars, master," said Morano. To whatever wars they went, the green bowmen seemed to have supplied an ample commissariat.

They ate. And Rodriguez thought of the wars, for the thought of Serafina made him sad, and his rejection of the life of the forest saddened him too; so he sought to draw from the future the comfort that he could not get from the past.

They mounted again and rode again for three hours, till they saw very far off on a hill a village that Miguel had told them was fifty miles from the forest.

“We rest the night there,” said Rodriguez pointing, though it was yet seven or eight miles away.

“All the Saints be praised,” said Morano.

They dismounted then and went on foot, for the horses were weary. At evening they rode slowly into the village. At an inn whose hospitable looks were as cheerfully unlike the Inn of the Dragon and Knight as possible, they demanded lodging for all four. They went first to the stable, and when the horses had been handed over to the care of a groom they returned to the inn, and mine host and Rodriguez had to help Morano up the three steps to the door, for he had walked nine miles that day and ridden fifty and he was too weary to climb the steps.

And later Rodriguez sat down alone to his supper at a table well and variously laden, for the doors of mine hosts’ larder were opened wide in his honour; but Rodriguez ate sparingly, as do weary men.

And soon he sought his bed. And on the old echoing stairs as he and mine host ascended they met Morano leaning against the wall. What shall I say of Morano? Reader, your sympathy is all ready to go out to the poor, weary man. He does not entirely deserve it, and shall not cheat you of it. Reader, Morano was drunk. I tell you this sorry truth rather than that the knave should have falsely come by your pity. And yet he is dead now over three hundred years, having had his good time to the full. Does he deserve your pity on that account? Or your envy? And to whom or what would you give it? Well, anyhow, he deserved no pity for being drunk. And yet he was thirsty, and too tired to eat, and sore in need of refreshment, and had had no more cause to learn to shun good wine than he had had to shun the smiles of princesses; and there the good wine had been, sparkling beside him merrily.

And now, why now, fatigued as he had been an hour or so ago (but time had lost its tiresome, restless meaning), now he stood firm while all things and all men staggered.

“Morano,” said Rodriguez as he passed that foolish figure, “we go sixty miles to-morrow.”

“Sixty, master?” said Morano. “A hundred: two hundred.”

“It is best to rest now,” said his master.

“Two hundred, master, two hundred,” Morano replied.

And then Rodriguez left him, and heard him muttering his challenge to distance still, “Two hundred, two hundred,” till the old stairway echoed with it.

And so he came to his chamber, of which he remembered little, for sleep lurked there and he was soon with dreams, faring further with them than my pen can follow.

THE EIGHTH CHRONICLE

HOW HE TRAVELLED FAR

One blackbird on a twig near Rodriguez' window sang, then there were fifty singing, and morning arose over Spain all golden and wonderful.

Rodriguez descended and found mine host rubbing his hands by his good table, with a look on his face that seemed to welcome the day and to find good auguries concerning it. But Morano looked as one that, having fallen from some far better place, is ill-content with earth and the mundane way.

He had scorned breakfast; but Rodriguez breakfasted. And soon the two were bidding mine host farewell. They found their horses saddled, they mounted at once, and rode off slowly in the early day. The horses were tired and, slowly trotting and walking, and sometimes dismounting and dragging the horses on, it was nearly two hours before they had done ten miles and come to the house of the smith in a rocky village: the street was cobbled and the houses were all of stone.

The early sparkle had gone from the dew, but it was still morning, and many a man but now sat down to his breakfast, as they arrived and beat on the door.

Gonzalez the smith opened it, a round and ruddy man past fifty, a citizen following a reputable trade, but once, ah once, a bowman.

"Señor," said Rodriguez, "our horses are weary. We have been told you will change them for us."

"Who told you that?" said Gonzalez.

"The green bowmen in Shadow Valley," the young man answered.

As a meteor at night lights up with its greenish glare flowers and blades of grass, twisting long shadows behind them, lights up lawns and bushes and the deep places of woods, scattering quiet night for a moment, so the unexpected answer of Rodriguez lit memories in the mind of the smith all down the long years; and a twinkle and a sparkle of those memories dancing in woods long forsaken flashed from his eyes.

"The green bowmen, señor," said Gonzalez. "Ah, Shadow Valley!"

"We left it yesterday," said Rodriguez.

When Gonzalez heard this he poured forth questions. "The forest, señor; how is it now with the forest? Do the boars still drink at Heather Pool? Do

the geese go still to Greatmarsh? They should have come early this year. How is it with Larios, Raphael, Migada? Who shoots woodcock now?"

The questions flowed on past answering, past remembering: he had not spoken of the forest for years. And Rodriguez answered as such questions are always answered, saying that all was well, and giving Gonzalez some little detail of some trifling affair of the forest, which he treasured as small shells are treasured in inland places when travellers bring them from the sea; but all that he heard of the forest seemed to the smith like something gathered on a far shore of time. Yes, he had been a bowman once.

But he had no horses. One horse that drew a cart, but no horses for riding at all. And Rodriguez thought of the immense miles lying between him and the foreign land, keeping him back from his ambition; they all pressed on his mind at once. The smith was sorry, but he could not make horses.

"Show him your coin, master," said Morano.

"Ah, a small token," said Rodriguez, drawing it forth still on its green ribbon under his clothing. "The bowman's badge, is it not?"

Gonzalez looked at it, then looked at Rodriguez.

"Master," he said, "you shall have your horses. Give me time: you shall have them. Enter, master." And he bowed and widely opened the door. "If you will breakfast in my house while I go to the neighbours you shall have some horses, master."

So they entered the house, and the smith with many bows gave the travellers over to the care of his wife, who saw from her husband's manner that these were persons of importance and as such she treated them both, and as such entertained them to their second breakfast. And this meant they ate heartily, as travellers can, who can go without a breakfast or eat two; and those who dwell in cities can do neither.

And while the plump dame did them honour they spoke no word of the forest, for they knew not what place her husband's early years had in her imagination.

They had barely finished their meal when the sound of hooves on cobbles was heard and Gonzalez beat on the door. They all went to the door and found him there with two horses. The horses were saddled and bridled. They fixed the stirrups to please them, then the travellers mounted at once. Rodriguez made his grateful farewell to the wife of the smith: then, turning to Gonzalez, he pointed to the two tired horses which had waited all the while with their reins thrown over a hook on the wall.

“Let the owner of these have them till his own come back,” he said, and added: “How far may I take these?”

“They are good horses,” said the smith.

“Yes,” said Rodriguez.

“They could do fifty miles to-day,” Gonzalez continued, “and to-morrow, why, forty, or a little more.”

“And where will that bring me?” said Rodriguez, pointing to the straight road which was going his way, north-eastward.

“That,” said Gonzalez, “that should bring you some ten or twenty miles short of Saspe.”

“And where shall I leave the horses?” Rodriguez asked.

“Master,” Gonzalez said, “in any village where there be a smith, if you say ‘these are the horses of the smith Gonzalez, who will come for them one day from here,’ they will take them in for you, master.”

“But,” and Gonzalez walked a little away from his wife, and the horses walked and he went beside them, “north of here none knows the bowmen. You will get no fresh horses, master. What will you do?”

“Walk,” said Rodriguez.

Then they said farewell, and there was a look on the face of the smith almost such as the sons of men might have worn in Genesis when angels visited them briefly.

They settled down into a steady trot and trotted thus for three hours. Noon came, and still there was no rest for Morano, but only dust and the monotonous sight of the road, on which his eyes were fixed: nearly an hour more passed, and at last he saw his master halt and turn round in his saddle.

“Dinner,” Rodriguez said.

All Morano’s weariness vanished: it was the hour of the frying-pan once more.

They had done more than twenty-one miles from the house of Gonzalez. Nimbly enough, in his joy at feeling the ground again, Morano ran and gathered sticks from the bushes. And soon he had a fire, and a thin column of grey smoke going up from it that to him was always home.

When the frying-pan warmed and lard sizzled, when the smell of bacon mingled with the smoke, then Morano was where all wise men and all unwise try to be, and where some of one or the other some times come for awhile, by unthought paths and are gone again; for that smoky, mixed odour was happiness.

Not for long men and horses rested, for soon Rodriguez' ambition was drawing him down the road again, of which he knew that there remained to be travelled over two hundred miles in Spain, and how much beyond that he knew not, nor greatly cared, for beyond the frontier of Spain he believed there lay the dim, desired country of romance where roads were long no more and no rain fell. They mounted again and pushed on for this country. Not a village they saw but that Morano hoped that here his affliction would end and that he would dismount and rest; and always Rodriguez rode on and Morano followed, and with a barking of dogs they were gone and the village rested behind them. For many an hour their slow trot carried them on; and Morano, clutching the saddle with worn arms, already was close to despair, when Rodriguez halted in a little village at evening before an inn. They had done their fifty miles from the house of Gonzalez, and even a little more.

Morano rolled from his horse and beat on the small green door. Mine host came out and eyed them, preening the point of his beard; and Rodriguez sat his horse and looked at him. They had not the welcome here that Gonzalez gave them; but there was a room to spare for Rodriguez, and Morano was promised what he asked for, straw; and there was shelter to be had for the horses. It was all the travellers needed.

Children peered at the strangers, gossips peeped out of doors to gather material concerning them, dogs noted their coming, the eyes of the little village watched them curiously, but Rodriguez and Morano passed into the house unheeding; and past those two tired men the mellow evening glided by like a dream. Tired though Rodriguez was he noticed a certain politeness in mine host while he waited at supper, which had not been noticeable when he had first received him, and rightly put this down to some talk of Morano's; but he did not guess that Morano had opened wide blue eyes and, babbling to his host, had guilelessly told him that his master a week ago had killed an uncivil inn-keeper.

Scarcely were late birds home before Rodriguez sought his bed, and not all of them were sleeping before he slept.

Another morning shone, and appeared to Spain, and all at once Rodriguez was wide awake. It was the eighth day of his wanderings.

When he had breakfasted and paid his due in silver he and Morano departed, leaving mine host upon his doorstep bowing with an almost perplexed look on his shrewd face as he took the points of moustachios and

beard lightly in turn between finger and thumb: for we of our day enter vague details about ourselves in the book downstairs when we stay at inns, but it was mine host's custom to gather all that with his sharp eyes. Whatever he gathered, Rodriguez and Morano were gone.

But soon their pace dwindled, the trot slackening and falling to a walk; soon Rodriguez learned what it is to travel with tired horses. To Morano riding was merely riding, and the discomforts of that were so great that he noticed no difference. But to Rodriguez, his continual hitting and kicking his horse's sides, his dislike of doing it, the uselessness of it when done, his ambition before and the tired beast underneath, the body always some yards behind the beckoning spirit, were as great vexation as a traveller knows. It came to dismounting and walking miles on foot; even then the horses hung back. They halted an hour over dinner while the horses grazed and rested, and they returned to their road refreshed by the magic that was in the frying-pan, but the horses were no fresher.

When our bodies are slothful and lie heavy, never responding to the spirit's bright promptings, then we know dullness: and the burden of it is the graver for hearing our spirits call faintly, as the chains of a buccaneer in some deep prison, who hears a snatch of his comrades' singing as they ride free by the coast, would grow more unbearable than ever before. But the weight of his tired horse seemed to hang heavier on the fanciful hopes that Rodriguez' dreams had made. Farther than ever seemed the Pyrenees, huger than ever their barrier, dimmer and dimmer grew the lands of romance.

If the hopes of Rodriguez were low, if his fancies were faint, what material have I left with which to make a story with glitter enough to hold my readers' eyes to the page: for know that mere dreams and idle fancies, and all amorous, lyrical, unsubstantial things, are all that we writers have of which to make a tale, as they are all that the Dim Ones have to make the story of man.

Sometimes riding, sometimes going on foot, with the thought of the long, long miles always crowding upon Rodriguez, overwhelming his hopes; till even the castle he was to win in the wars grew too pale for his fancy to see, tired and without illusions, they came at last by starlight to the glow of a smith's forge. He must have done forty-five miles and he knew they were near Caspe.

The smith was working late, and looked up when Rodriguez halted. Yes, he knew Gonzalez, a master in the trade: there was a welcome for his

horses.

But for the two human travellers there were excuses, even apologies, but no spare beds. It was the same in the next three or four houses that stood together by the road. And the fever of Rodriguez' ambition drove him on, though Morano would have lain down and slept where they stood, though he himself was weary. The smith had received his horses; after that he cared not whether they gave him shelter or not, the alternative being the road, and that bringing nearer his wars and the castle he was to win. And that fancy that led his master Morano allowed always to lead him too, though a few more miles and he would have fallen asleep as he walked and dropped by the roadside and slept on. Luckily they had gone barely two miles from the forge where the horses rested, when they saw a high, dark house by the road and knocked on the door and found shelter. It was an old woman who let them in, a farmer's wife, and she had room for them and one mattress, but no bed. They were too tired to eat and did not ask for food, but at once followed her up the booming stairs of her house, which were all dark but for her candle, and so came among huge minuetting shadows to the long loft at the top. There was a mattress there which the old woman laid out for Rodriguez, and a heap of hay for Morano. Just for a moment, as Rodriguez climbed the last step of the stair and entered the loft where the huge shadows twirled between the one candle's light and the unbeaten darkness in corners, just for a moment romance seemed to beckon to him; for a moment, in spite of his fatigue and dejection, in spite of the possibility of his quest being crazy, for a moment he felt that great shadows and echoing boards, the very cobwebs even that hung from the black rafters, were all romantic things; he felt that his was a glorious adventure and that all these things that filled the loft in the night were such as should fitly attend on youth and glory. In a moment that feeling was gone he knew not why it had come. And though he remembered it till grey old age, when he came to know the causes of many things, he never knew what romance might have to do with shadows or echoes at night in an empty room, and only knew of such fancies that they came from beyond his understanding, whether from wisdom or folly.

Morano was first asleep, as enormous snores testified, almost before the echoes had died away of the footsteps of the old woman descending the stairs; but soon Rodriguez followed him into the region of dreams, where fantastic ambitions can live with less of a struggle than in the broad light of

day: he dreamed he walked at night down a street of castles strangely colossal in an awful starlight, with doors too vast for any human need, whose battlements were far in the heights of night; and chose, it being in time of war, the one that should be his; but the gargoyles on it were angry and spoiled the dream.

Dream followed dream with furious rapidity, as the dreams of tired men do, racing each other, jostling and mingling and dancing, an ill-assorted company: myriads went by, a wild, grey, cloudy multitude; and with the last walked dawn.

Rodriguez rose more relieved to quit so tumultuous a rest than refreshed by having had it.

He descended, leaving Morano to sleep on, and not till the old dame had made a breakfast ready did he return to interrupt his snores.

Even as he awoke upon his heap of hay Morano remained as true to his master's fantastic quest as the camel is true to the pilgrimage to Mecca. He awoke grumbling, as the camel grumbles at dawn when the packs are put on him where he lies, but never did he doubt that they went to victorious wars where his master would win a castle splendid with towers.

Breakfast cheered both the travellers. And then the old lady told Rodriguez that Caspe was but a three hours' walk, and that cheered them even more, for Caspe is on the Ebro, which seemed to mark for Rodriguez a stage in his journey, being carried easily in his imagination, like the Pyrenees. What road he would take when he reached Caspe he had not planned. And soon Rodriguez expressed his gratitude, full of fervour, with many a flowery phrase which lived long in the old dame's mind; and the visit of those two travellers became one of the strange events of that house and was chief of the memories that faintly haunted the rafters of the loft for years.

They did not reach Caspe in three hours, but went lazily, being weary; for however long a man defies fatigue the hour comes when it claims him. The knowledge that Caspe lay near with sure lodging for the night, soothed Rodriguez' impatience. And as they loitered they talked, and they decided that la Garda must now be too far behind to pursue any longer. They came in four hours to the bank of the Ebro and there saw Caspe near them; but they dined once more on the grass, sitting beside the river, rather than enter the town at once, for there had grown in both travellers a liking for the wanderers' green table of earth.

It was a time to make plans. The country of romance was far away and they were without horses.

“Will you buy horses, master?” said Morano.

“We might not get them over the Pyrenees,” said Rodriguez, though he had a better reason, which was that three gold pieces did not buy two saddled horses. There were no more friends to hire from. Morano grew thoughtful. He sat with his feet dangling over the bank of the Ebro.

“Master,” he said after a while, “this river goes our way. Let us come by boat, master, and drift down to France at our ease.”

To get a river over a range of mountains is harder than to get horses. Some such difficulty Rodriguez implied to him; but Morano, having come slowly by an idea, parted not so easily with it.

“It goes our way, master,” he repeated, and pointed a finger at the Ebro.

At this moment a certain song that boatmen sing on that river, when the current is with them and they have nothing to do but be idle and their lazy thoughts run to lascivious things, came to the ears of Rodriguez and Morano; and a man with a bright blue sash steered down the Ebro. He had been fishing and was returning home.

“Master,” Morano said, “that knave shall row us there.”

Rodriguez seeing that the idea was fixed in Morano’s mind determined that events would move it sooner than argument, and so made no reply.

“Shall I tell him, master?” asked Morano.

“Yes,” said Rodriguez, “if he can row us over the Pyrenees.”

This was the permission that Morano sought, and a hideous yell broke from his throat hailing the boatman. The boatman looked up lazily, a young man with strong brown arms, turning black moustaches towards Morano. Again Morano hailed him and ran along the bank, while the boat drifted down and the boatman steered in towards Morano. Somehow Morano persuaded him to come in to see what he wanted; and in a creek he ran his boat aground, and there he and Morano argued and bargained. But Rodriguez remained where he was, wondering why it took so long to turn his servant’s mind from that curious fancy. At last Morano returned.

“Well?” said Rodriguez.

“Master,” said Morano, “he will row us to the Pyrenees.”

“The Pyrenees!” said Rodriguez. “The Ebro runs into the sea.” For they had taught him this at the college of San Josephus.

“He will row us there,” said Morano, “for a gold piece a day, rowing five hours each day.”

Now between them they had but four gold pieces; but that did not make the Ebro run northward. It seemed that the Ebro, after going their way, as Morano had said, for twenty or thirty miles, was joined by the river Segre, and that where the Ebro left them, turning eastwards, the course of the Segre took them on their way: but it would be rowing against the current.

“How far is it?” said Rodriguez.

“A hundred miles, he says,” answered Morano. “He knows it well.”

Rodriguez calculated swiftly. First he added thirty miles; for he knew that his countrymen took a cheerful view of distance, seldom allowing any distance to oppress them under its true name at the out set of a journey; then he guessed that the boatman might row five miles an hour for the first thirty miles with the stream of the Ebro, and he hoped that he might row three against the Segre until they came near the mountains, where the current might grow too strong.

“Morano,” he said, “we shall have to row too.”

“Row, master?” said Morano.

“We can pay him for four days,” said Rodriguez. “If we all row we may go far on our way.”

“It is better than riding,” replied Morano with entire resignation.

And so they walked to the creek and Rodriguez greeted the boatman, whose name was Perez; and they entered the boat and he rowed them down to Caspe. And, in the house of Perez, Rodriguez slept that night in a large dim room, untidy with diverse wares: they slept on heaps of things that pertained to the river and fishing. Yet it was late before Rodriguez slept, for in sight of his mind came glimpses at last of the end of his journey; and, when he slept at last, he saw the Pyrenees. Through the long night their mighty heads rejected him, staring immeasurably beyond him in silence, and then in happier dreams they beckoned him for a moment. Till at last a bird that had entered the city of Caspe sang clear and it was dawn. With that first light Rodriguez arose and awoke Morano. Together they left that long haven of lumber and found Perez already stirring. They ate hastily and all went down to the boat, the unknown that waits at the end of all strange journeys quickening their steps as they went through the early light.

Perez rowed first and the others took their turns and so they went all the morning down the broad flood of the Ebro, and came in the afternoon to its

meeting place with the Segre. And there they landed and stretched their limbs on shore and lit a fire and feasted, before they faced the current that would be henceforth against them. Then they rowed on.

When they landed by starlight and unrolled a sheet of canvas that Perez had put in the boat, and found what a bad time starlight is for pitching a tent, Rodriguez and Morano had rowed for four hours each and Perez had rowed for five. They carried no timber in the boat but used the oars for tent-poles and cut tent-pegs with a small hatchet that Perez had brought.

They stumbled on rocks, tore the canvas on bushes, lost the same thing over and over again; in fact they were learning the craft of wandering. Yet at last their tent was up and a good fire comforting them outside, and Morano had cooked the food and they had supped and talked, and after that they slept. And over them sleeping the starlight faded away, and in the greyness that none of them dreamed was dawn five clear notes were heard so shrill in the night that Rodriguez half waking wondered what bird of the darkness called, and learned from the answering chorus that it was day.

He woke Morano who rose in that chilly hour and, striking sparks among last night's embers, soon had a fire: they hastily made a meal and wrapped up their tent and soon they were going onward against the tide of the Segre. And that day Morano rowed more skilfully; and Rodriguez unwrapped his mandolin and played, reclining in the boat while he rested from rowing. And the mandolin told them all, what the words of none could say, that they fared to adventure in the land of Romance, to the overthrow of dullness and the sameness of all drear schemes and the conquest of discontent in the spirit of man; and perhaps it sang of a time that has not yet come, or the mandolin lied.

That evening three wiser men made their camp before starlight. They were now far up the Segre.

For thirteen hours next day they toiled at the oars or lay languid. And while Rodriguez rested he played on his mandolin. The Segre slipped by them.

They seemed like no men on their way to war, but seemed to loiter as the bright river loitered, which slid seaward in careless ease and was wholly freed from time.

On this day they heard men speak of the Pyrenees, two men and a woman walking by the river; their voices came to the boat across the water, and they spoke of the Pyrenees. And on the next day they heard men speak

of war. War that some farmers had fled from on the other side of the mountain. When Rodriguez heard these chance words his dreams came nearer till they almost touched the edges of reality.

It was the last day of Perez' rowing. He rowed well although they neared the cradle of the Segre and he struggled against them in his youth. Grey peaks began to peer that had nursed that river. Grey faces of stone began to look over green hills. They were the Pyrenees.

When Rodriguez saw at last the Pyrenees he drew a breath and was unable to speak. Soon they were gone again below the hills: they had but peered for a moment to see who troubled the Segre.

And the sun set and still they did not camp, but Perez rowed on into the starlight. That day he rowed six hours.

They pitched their tent as well as they could in the darkness; and, breathing a clear new air all crisp from the Pyrenees, they slept outside the threshold of adventure.

Rodriguez awoke cold. Once more he heard the first blackbird who sings clear at the edge of night all alone in the greyness, the nightingale's only rival; a rival like some unknown in the midst of a crowd who for a moment leads some well-loved song, in notes more liquid than a master-singer's; and all the crowd joins in and his voice is lost, and no one learns his name. At once a host of birds answered him out of dim bushes, whose shapes had barely as yet emerged from night. And in this chorus Perez awoke, and even Morano.

They all three breakfasted together, and then the wanderers said good-bye to Perez. And soon he was gone with his bright blue sash, drifting homewards with the Segre, well paid yet singing a little sadly as he drifted; for he had been one of a quest, and now he left it at the edge of adventure, near solemn mountains and, beyond them, romantic, near-unknown lands. So Perez left and Rodriguez and Morano turned again to the road, all the more lightly because they had not done a full day's march for so long, and now a great one unrolled its leagues before them.

The heads of the mountains showed themselves again. They tramped as in the early days of their quest. And as they went the mountains, unveiling themselves slowly, dropping film after film of distance that hid their mighty forms, gradually revealed to the wanderers the magnificence of their beauty. Till at evening Rodriguez and Morano stood on a low hill, looking at that tremendous range, which lifted far above the fields of Earth, as though its

mountains were no earthly things but sat with Fate and watched us and did not care.

Rodriguez and Morano stood and gazed in silence. They had come twenty miles since morning, they were tired and hungry, but the mountains held them: they stood there looking neither for rest nor food. Beyond them, sheltering under the low hills, they saw a little village. Smoke straggled up from it high into the evening: beyond the village woods sloped away upwards. But far above smoke or woods the bare peaks brooded. Rodriguez gazed on their austere solemnity, wondering what secret they guarded there for so long, guessing what message they held and hid from man; until he learned that the mystery they guarded among them was of things that he knew not and could never know.

Tinkle-ting said the bells of a church, invisible among the houses of that far village. Tinkle-ting said the crescent of hills that sheltered it. And after a while, speaking out of their grim and enormous silences with all the gravity of their hundred ages, Tinkle-ting said the mountains. With this trivial message Echo returned from among the homes of the mighty, where she had run with the small bell's tiny cry to trouble their crowned aloofness.

Rodriguez and Morano pressed on, and the mountains cloaked themselves as they went, in air of many colours; till the stars came out and the lights of the village gleamed. In darkness, with surprise in the tones of the barking dogs, the two wanderers came to the village where so few ever came, for it lay at the end of Spain, cut off by those mighty rocks, and they knew not much of what lands lay beyond.

They beat on a door below a hanging board, on which was written "The Inn of the World's End": a wandering scholar had written it and had been well paid for his work, for in those days writing was rare. The door was opened for them by the host of the inn, and they entered a room in which men who had supped were sitting at a table. They were all of them men from the Spanish side of the mountains, farmers come into the village on the affairs of Mother Earth; next day they would be back at their farms again; and of the land the other side of the mountains that was so near now they knew nothing, so that it still remained for the wanderers a thing of mystery wherein romance could dwell: and because they knew nothing of that land the men at the inn treasured all the more the rumours that sometimes came from it, and of these they talked, and mine host listened

eagerly, to whom all tales were brought soon or late; and most he loved to hear tales from beyond the mountains.

Rodriguez and Morano sat still and listened, and the talk was all of war. It was faint and vague like fable, but rumour clearly said War, and the other side of the mountains. It may be that no man has a crazy ambition without at moments suspecting it; but prove it by the touchstone of fact and he becomes at once as a woman whose invalid son, after years of seclusion indoors, wins unexpectedly some athletic prize. When Rodriguez heard all this talk of wars quite near he thought of his castle as already won; his thoughts went further even, floating through Lowlight in the glowing evening, and drifting up and down past Serafina's house below the balcony where she sat for ever.

Some said the Duke would never attack the Prince because the Duke's aunt was a princess from the Troubadour's country. Another said that there would surely be war. Others said that there was war already, and too late for man to stop it. All said it would soon be over.

And one man said that it was the last war that would come, because gunpowder made fighting impossible. It could smite a man down, he said, at two hundred paces, and a man be slain not knowing whom he fought. Some loved fighting and some loved peace, he said, but gunpowder suited none.

"I like not the sound of that gunpowder, master," said Morano to Rodriguez.

"Nobody likes it," said the man at the table. "It is the end of war." And some sighed and some were glad. But Rodriguez determined to push on before the last war was over.

Next morning Rodriguez paid the last of his silver pieces and set off with Morano before any but mine host were astir. There was nothing but the mountains in front of them.

They climbed all the morning and they came to the fir woods. There they lit a good fire and Morano brought out his frying-pan. Over the meal they took stock of their provisions and found that, for all the store Morano had brought from the forest, they had now only food for three days; and they were quite without money. Money in those uplifted wastes seemed trivial, but the dwindling food told Rodriguez that he must press on; for man came among those rocky monsters supplied with all his needs, or perished unnoticed before their stony faces. All the afternoon they passed through the

fir woods, and as shadows began to grow long they passed the last tree. The village and all the fields about it and the road by which they had come were all spread out below them like little trivial things dimly remembered from very long ago by one whose memory weakens. Distance had dwarfed them, and the cold regard of those mighty peaks ignored them. And then a shadow fell on the village, then tiny lights shone out. It was night down there. Still the two wanderers climbed on in the daylight. With their faces to the rocks they scarce saw night climb up behind them. But when Rodriguez looked up at the sky to see how much light was left, and met the calm gaze of the evening star, he saw that Night and the peaks were met together, and understood all at once how puny an intruder is man.

"Morano," said Rodriguez, "we must rest here for the night."

Morano looked round him with an air of discontent, not with his master's words but with the rocks' angular hardness. There was scarce a plant of any kind near them now. They were near the snow, which had flushed like a wild rose at sunset but was now all grey. Grey cliffs seemed to be gazing sheer at eternity; and here was man, the creature of a moment, who had strayed in the cold all homeless among his betters. There was no welcome for them there: whatever feeling great mountains evoke, THAT feeling was clear in Rodriguez and Morano. They were all amongst those that have other aims, other ends, and know naught of man. A bitter chill from the snow and from starry space drove this thought home.

They walked on looking for a better place, as men will, but found none. And at last they lay down on the cold earth under a rock that seemed to give shelter from the wind, and there sought sleep; but cold came instead, and sleep kept far from the tremendous presences of the peaks of the Pyrenees that gazed on things far from here.

An ageing moon arose, and Rodriguez touched Morano and rose up; and the two went slowly on, tired though they were. Picture the two tiny figures, bent, shivering and weary, walking with clumsy sticks cut in the wood, amongst the scorn of those tremendous peaks, which the moon showed all too clearly.

They got little warmth from walking, they were too weary to run; and after a while they halted and burned their sticks, and got a little warmth for some moments from their fire, which burned feebly and strangely in those inhuman solitudes.

Then they went on again and their track grew steeper. They rested again for fatigue, and rose and climbed again because of the cold; and all the while the peaks stared over them to spaces far beyond the thought of man.

Long before Spain knew anything of dawn a monster high in heaven smiled at the sun, a peak out-towering all its aged children. It greeted the sun as though this lonely thing, that scorned the race of man since ever it came, had met a mighty equal out in Space. The vast peak glowed, and the rest of its grey race took up the greeting leisurely one by one. Still it was night in all Spanish houses.

Rodriguez and Morano were warmed by that cold peak's glow, though no warmth came from it at all; but the sight of it cheered them and their pulses rallied, and so they grew warmer in that bitter hour.

And then dawn came, and showed them that they were near the top of the pass. They had come to the snow that gleams there everlastingly.

There was no material for a fire but they ate cold meats, and went wearily on. They passed through that awful assemblage of peaks. By noon they were walking upon level ground.

In the afternoon Rodriguez, tired with the journey and with the heat of the sun, decided that it was possible to sleep, and, wrapping his cloak around him, he lay down, doing what Morano would have done, by instinct. Morano was asleep at once and Rodriguez soon after. They awoke with the cold at sunset.

Refreshed amazingly they ate some food and started their walk again to keep themselves warm for the night. They were still on level ground and set out with a good stride in their relief at being done with climbing. Later they slowed down and wandered just to keep warm. And some time in the starlight they felt their path dip, and knew that they were going downward now to the land of Rodriguez' dreams.

When the peaks glowed again, first meeting day in her earliest dancing-grounds of filmy air, they stood now behind the wanderers. Below them still in darkness lay the land of their dream, but hitherto it had always faded at dawn. Now hills put up their heads one by one through films of mist; woods showed, then hedges, and afterwards fields, greyly at first and then, in the cold hard light of morning, becoming more and more real. The sight of the land so long sought, at moments believed by Morano not to exist on earth, perhaps to have faded away when fables died, swept their fatigue from the wanderers, and they stepped out helped by the slope of the Pyrenees and

cheered by the rising sun. They came at last to things that welcome man, little shrubs flowering, and — at noon — to the edge of a fir wood. They entered the wood and lit a merry fire, and heard birds singing, at which they both rejoiced, for the great peaks had said nothing.

They ate the food that Morano cooked, and drew warmth and cheer from the fire, and then they slept a little: and, rising from sleep, they pushed on through the wood, downward and downward toward the land of their dreams, to see if it was true.

They passed the wood and came to curious paths, and little hills, and heath, and rocky places, and wandering vales that twisted all awry. They passed through them all with the slope of the mountain behind them. When level rays from the sunset mellowed the fields of France the wanderers were walking still, but the peaks were far behind them, austerely gazing on the remotest things, forgetting the footsteps of man. And walking on past soft fields in the evening, all tilted a little about the mountain's feet, they had scarcely welcomed the sight of the evening star, when they saw before them the mild glow of a window and knew they were come again to the earth that is mother to man. In their cold savagery the inhuman mountains decked themselves out like gods with colours they took from the sunset; then darkened, all those peaks, in brooding conclave and disappeared in the night. And the hushed night heard the tiny rap of Morano's hands on the door of the house that had the glowing window.

THE NINTH CHRONICLE

HOW HE WON A CASTLE IN SPAIN

The woman that came to the door had on her face a look that pleased Morano.

"Are you soldiers?" she said. And her scared look portended war.

"My master is a traveller looking for the wars," said Morano. "Are the wars near?"

"Oh, no, not near," said the woman; "not near."

And something in the anxious way she said "not near" pleased Morano also.

"We shall find those wars, master," he said.

And then they both questioned her. It seemed the wars were but twenty miles away. "But they will move northward," she said. "Surely they will move farther off?"

Before the next night was passed Rodriguez' dream might come true!

And then the man came to the door anxious at hearing strange voices; and Morano questioned him too, but he understood never a word. He was a French farmer that had married a Spanish girl, out of the wonderful land beyond the mountains: but whether he understood her or not he never understood Spanish. But both Rodriguez and the farmer's wife knew the two languages, and he had no difficulty in asking for lodging for the night; and she looked wistfully at him going to the wars, for in those days wars were small and not every man went. The night went by with dreams that were all on the verge of waking, which passed like ghosts along the edge of night almost touched by the light of day. It was Rodriguez whom these dreams visited. The farmer and his wife wondered awhile and then slept; Morano slept with all his wonted lethargy; but Rodriguez with his long quest now on the eve of fulfilment slept a tumultuous sleep. Sometimes his dreams raced over the Pyrenees, running south as far as Lowlight; and sometimes they rushed forward and clung like bats to the towers of the great castle that he should win in the war. And always he lay so near the edge of sleep that he never distinguished quite between thought and dream.

Dawn came and he put by all the dreams but the one that guided him always, and went and woke Morano. They ate hurriedly and left the house,

and again the farmer's wife looked curiously at Rodriguez, as though there were something strange in a man that went to wars: for those days were not as these days. They followed the direction that had been given them, and never had the two men walked so fast. By the end of four hours they had done sixteen miles. They halted then, and Morano drew out his frying-pan with a haughty flourish, and cooked in the grand manner, every movement he made was a triumphant gesture; for they had passed refugees! War was now obviously close: they had but to take the way that the refugees were not taking. The dream was true: Morano saw himself walking slowly in splendid dress along the tapestried corridors of his master's castle. He would have slept after eating and would have dreamed more of this, but Rodriguez commanded him to put the things together: so what remained of the food disappeared again in a sack, the frying-pan was slung over his shoulders, and Morano stood ready again for the road.

They passed more refugees: their haste was unmistakable, and told more than their lips could have told had they tarried to speak: the wars were near now, and the wanderers went leisurely.

As they strolled through the twilight they came over the brow of a hill, a little fold of the earth disturbed eras ago by the awful rushing up of the Pyrenees; and they saw the evening darkening over the fields below them and a white mist rising only just clear of the grass, and two level rows of tents greyish-white like the mist, with a few more tents scattered near them. The tents had come up that evening with the mist, for there were men still hammering pegs. They were lighting fires now as evening settled in. Two hundred paces or so separated each row. It was two armies facing each other.

The gloaming faded: mist and the tents grew greyer: camp-fires blinked out of the dimness and grew redder and redder, and candles began to be lit beside the tents till all were glowing pale golden: Rodriguez and Morano stood there wondering awhile as they looked on the beautiful aura that surrounds the horrors of war.

They came by starlight to that tented field, by twinkling starlight to the place of Rodriguez' dream.

"For which side will you fight, master?" said Morano in his ear.

"For the right," said Rodriguez and strode on towards the nearest tents, never doubting that he would be guided, though not trying to comprehend how this could be.

They met with an officer going among his tents. “Where do you go?” he shouted.

“Señor,” Rodriguez said, “I come with my mandolin to sing songs to you.”

And at this the officer called out and others came from their tents; and Rodriguez repeated his offer to them not without confidence, for he knew that he had a way with the mandolin. And they said that they fought a battle on the morrow and could not listen to song: they heaped scorn on singing for they said they must needs prepare for the fight: and all of them looked with scorn on the mandolin. So Rodriguez bowed low to them with doffed hat and left them; and Morano bowed also, seeing his master bow; and the men of that camp returned to their preparations. A short walk brought Rodriguez and his servant to the other camp, over a flat field convenient for battle. He went up to a large tent well lit, the door being open towards him; and, having explained his errand to a sentry that stood outside, he entered and saw three persons of quality that were sitting at a table. To them he bowed low in the tent door, saying: “Señors, I am come to sing songs to you, playing the while upon my mandolin.”

And they welcomed him gladly, saying: “We fight tomorrow and will gladly cheer our hearts with the sound of song and strengthen our men thereby.”

And so Rodriguez sang among the tents, standing by a great fire to which they led him; and men came from the tents and into the circle of light, and in the darkness outside it were more than Rodriguez saw. And he sang to the circle of men and the vague glimmer of faces. Songs of their homes he sang them, not in their language, but songs that were made by old poets about the homes of their infancy, in valleys under far mountains remote from the Pyrenees. And in the song the yearnings of dead poets lived again, all streaming homeward like swallows when the last of the storms is gone: and those yearnings echoed in the hearts that beat in the night around the campfire, and they saw their own homes. And then he began to touch his mandolin; and he played them the tunes that draw men from their homes and that march them away to war. The tunes flowed up from the firelight: the mandolin knew. And the men heard the mandolin saying what they would say.

In the late night he ended, and a hush came down on the camp while the music floated away, going up from the dark ring of men and the fire-lit

faces, touching perhaps the knees of the Pyrenees and drifting thence wherever echoes go. And the sparks of the camp-fire went straight upwards as they had done for hours, and the men that sat around it saw them go: for long they had not seen the sparks stream upwards, for their thoughts were far away with the mandolin. And all at once they cheered. And Rodriguez bowed to the one whose tent he had entered, and sought permission to fight for them in the morning.

With good grace this was accorded him, and while he bowed and well expressed his thanks he felt Morano touching his elbow. And as soon as he had gone aside with Morano that fat man's words bubbled over and were said.

"Master, fight not for these men," he exclaimed, "for they listen to song till midnight while the others prepare for battle. The others will win the fight, master, and where will your castle be?"

"Morano," said Rodriguez, "there seems to be truth in that. Yet must we fight for the right. For how would it be if those that have denied song should win and thrive? The arm of every good man must be against them. They have denied song, Morano! We must fight against them, you and I, while we can lay sword to head."

"Yes, indeed, master," said Morano. "But how shall you come by your castle?"

"As for that," said Rodriguez, "it must some day be won, yet not by denying song. These have given a welcome to song, and the others have driven it forth. And what would life be if those that deny song are to be permitted to thrive unmolested by all good men?"

"I know not, master," said Morano, "but I would have that castle."

"Enough," said Rodriguez. "We must fight for the right."

And so Rodriguez remained true to those that had heard him sing. And they gave him a casque and breast-plate, proof, they said, against any sword, and offered a sword that they said would surely cleave any breast-plate. For they fought not in battle with the nimble rapier. But Rodriguez did not forsake that famous exultant sword whose deeds he knew from many an ancient song; which he had brought so far to give it its old rich drink of blood. He believed it the bright key of the castle he was to win.

And they gave Rodriguez a good bed on the ground in the tent of the three leaders, the tent to which he first came; for they honoured him for the gift of song that he had, and because he was a stranger, and because he had

asked permission to fight for them in their battle. And Rodriguez took one look by the light of a lantern at the rose he had carried from Lowlight, then slept a sleep through whose dreams loomed up the towers of castles.

Dawn came and he slept on still; but by seven all the camp was loudly astir, for they had promised the enemy to begin the battle at eight. Rodriguez breakfasted lightly; for, now that the day of his dreams was come at last and all his hopes depended on the day, an anxiety for many things oppressed him. It was as though his castle, rosy and fair in dreams, chilled with its huge cold rocks all the air near it: it was as though Rodriguez touched it at last with his hands and felt a dankness of which he had never dreamed.

Then it came to the hour of eight and his anxieties passed.

The army was now drawn up before its tents in line, but the enemy was not yet ready and so they had to wait.

When the signal at length was given and the cannoniers fired their pieces, and the musketoons were shot off, many men fell. Now Rodriguez, with Morano, was placed on the right, and either through a slight difference in numbers or because of an unevenness in the array of battle they a little overlapped the enemy's left. When a few men fell wounded there by the discharge of the musketoons this overlapping was even more pronounced.

Now the leaders of that fair army scorned all unknightly devices, and would never have descended to any vile ruse de guerre. The reproach can therefore never be made against them that they ever intended to outflank their enemy. Yet, when both armies advanced after the discharge of the musketoons and the merry noise of the cannon, this occurred as the result of chance, which no leader can be held accountable for; so that those that speak of treachery in this battle, and deliberate outflanking, lie.

Now Rodriguez as he advanced with his sword, when the musketoons were empty, had already chosen his adversary. For he had carefully watched those opposite to him, before any smoke should obscure them, and had selected the one who from the splendour of his dress might be expected to possess the finest castle. Certainly this adversary outshone those amongst whom he stood, and gave fair promise of owning goodly possessions, for he wore a fine green cloak over a dress of lilac, and his helm and cuirass had a look of crafty workmanship. Towards him Rodriguez marched.

Then began fighting foot to foot, and there was a pretty laying on of swords. And had there been a poet there that day then the story of their fight

had come down to you, my reader, all that way from the Pyrenees, down all those hundreds of years, and this tale of mine had been useless, the lame repetition in prose of songs that your nurses had sung to you. But they fought unseen by those that see for the Muses.

Rodriguez advanced upon his chosen adversary and, having briefly bowed, they engaged at once. And Rodriguez belaboured his helm till dints appeared, and beat it with swift strokes yet till the dints were cracks, and beat the cracks till hair began to appear: and all the while his adversary's strokes grew weaker and wilder, until he tottered to earth and Rodriguez had won. Swift then as cats, while Morano kept off others, Rodriguez leaped to his throat, and, holding up the stiletto that he had long ago taken as his legacy from the host of the Dragon and Knight, he demanded the fallen man's castle as ransom for his life.

"My castle, señor?" said his prisoner weakly.

"Yes," said Rodriguez impatiently.

"Yes, señor," said his adversary and closed his eyes for awhile.

"Does he surrender his castle, master?" asked Morano.

"Yes, indeed," said Rodriguez. They looked at each other: all at last was well.

The battle was rolling away from them and was now well within the enemy's tents.

History says of that day that the good men won. And, sitting, a Muse upon her mythical mountain, her decision must needs be one from which we may not appeal: and yet I wonder if she is ever bribed. Certainly the shrewd sense of Morano erred for once; for those for whom he had predicted victory, because they prepared so ostentatiously upon the field, were defeated; while the others, having made their preparations long before, were able to cheer themselves with song before the battle and to win it when it came.

And so Rodriguez was left undisturbed in possession of his prisoner and with the promise of his castle as a ransom. The battle was swiftly over, as must needs be where little armies meet so close. The enemy's camp was occupied, his army routed, and within an hour of beginning the battle the last of the fighting ceased.

The army returned to its tents to rejoice and to make a banquet, bringing with them captives and horses and other spoils of war. And Rodriguez had honour among them because he had fought on the right and so was one of

those that had broken the enemy's left, from which direction victory had come. And they would have feasted him and done him honour, both for his work with the sword and for his songs to the mandolin; and they would have marched away soon to their own country and would have taken him with them and advanced him to honour there. But Rodriguez would not stay with them for he had his castle at last, and must needs march off at once with his captive and Morano to see the fulfilment of his dream. And therefore he thanked the leaders of that host with many a courtesy and many a well-bent bow, and explained to them how it was about his castle, and felicitated them on the victory of their good cause, and so wished them farewell. And they said farewell sorrowfully: but when they saw he would go, they gave him horses for himself and Morano, and another for his captive; and they heaped them with sacks of provender and blankets and all things that could give him comfort upon a journey: all this they brought him out of their spoils of war, and they would give him no less that the most that the horses could carry. And then Rodriguez turned to his captive again, who now stood on his feet.

"Señor," he said, "pray tell us all of your castle wherewith you ransom your life."

"Señor," he answered, "I have a castle in Spain."

"Master," broke in Morano, his eyes lighting up with delight, "there are no castles like the Spanish ones."

They got to horse then, all three; the captive on a horse of far poorer build than the other two and well-laden with sacks, for Rodriguez took no chance of his castle cantering, as it were, away from him on four hooves through the dust.

And when they heard that his journey was by way of the Pyrenees four knights of that army swore they would ride with him as far as the frontier of Spain, to bear him company and bring him fuel in the lonely cold of the mountains. They all set off and the merry army cheered. He left them making ready for their banquet, and never knew the cause for which he had fought.

They came by evening again to the house to which Rodriguez had come two nights before, when he had slept there with his castle yet to win. They all halted before it, and the man and the woman came to the door terrified. "The wars!" they said.

“The wars,” said one of the riders, “are over, and the just cause has won.”

“The Saints be praised!” said the woman. “But will there be no more fighting?”

“Never again,” said the horseman, “for men are sick of gunpowder.”

“The Saints be thanked,” she said.

“Say not that,” said the horseman, “for Satan invented gunpowder.”

And she was silent; but, had none been there, she had secretly thanked Satan.

They demanded the food and shelter that armed men have the right to demand.

In the morning they were gone. They became a memory, which lingered like a vision, made partly of sunset and partly of the splendour of their cloaks, and so went down the years that those two folk had, a thing of romance, magnificence and fear. And now the slope of the mountain began to lift against them, and they rode slowly towards those unearthly peaks that had deserted the level fields before ever man came to them, and that sat there now familiar with stars and dawn with the air of never having known of man. And as they rode they talked. And Rodriguez talked with the four knights that rode with him, and they told tales of war and told of the ways of fighting of many men: and Morano rode behind them beside the captive and questioned him all the morning about his castle in Spain. And at first the captive answered his questions slowly, as if he were weary, or as though he were long from home and remembered its features dimly; but memory soon returned and he answered clearly, telling of such a castle as Morano had not dreamed; and the eyes of the fat man bulged as he rode beside him, growing rounder and rounder as they rode.

They came by sunset to that wood of firs in which Rodriguez had rested. In the midst of the wood they halted and tethered their horses to trees; they tied blankets to branches and made an encampment; and in the midst of it they made a fire, at first, with pine-needles and the dead lower twigs and then with great logs. And there they feasted together, all seven, around the fire. And when the feast was over and the great logs burning well, and red sparks went up slowly towards the silver stars, Morano turned to the prisoner seated beside him and “Tell the señors,” he said, “of my master’s castle.”

And in the silence, that was rather lulled than broken by the whispering wind from the snow that sighed through the wood, the captive slowly lifted up his head and spoke in his queer accent.

"Señors, in Aragon, across the Ebro, are many goodly towers." And as he spoke they all leaned forward to listen, dark faces bright with firelight. "On the Ebro's southern bank stands," he went on, "my home."

He told of strange rocks rising from the Ebro; of buttresses built among them in unremembered times; of the great towers lifting up in multitudes from the buttresses; and of the mighty wall, windowless until it came to incredible heights, where the windows shone all safe from any ladder of war.

At first they felt in his story his pride in his lost home, and wondered, when he told of the height of his towers, how much he added in pride. And then the force of that story gripped them all and they doubted never a battlement, but each man's fancy saw between firelight and starlight every tower clear in the air. And at great height upon those marvellous towers the turrets of arches were; queer carvings grinned down from above inaccessible windows; and the towers gathered in light from the lonely air where nothing stood but they, and flashed it far over Aragon; and the Ebro floated by them always new, always amazed by their beauty.

He spoke to the six listeners on the lonely mountain, slowly, remembering mournfully; and never a story that Romance has known and told of castles in Spain has held men more than he held his listeners, while the sparks flew up toward the peaks of the Pyrenees and did not reach to them but failed in the night, giving place to the white stars.

And when he faltered through sorrow, or memory weakening, Morano always, watching with glittering eyes, would touch his arm, sitting beside him, and ask some question, and the captive would answer the question and so talk sadly on.

He told of the upper terraces, where heliotrope and aloe and oleander took sunlight far above their native earth: and though but rare winds carried the butterflies there, such as came to those fragrant terraces lingered for ever.

And after a while he spoke on carelessly, and Morano's questions ended, and none of the men in the firelight said a word; but he spoke on uninterrupted, holding them as by a spell, with his eyes fixed far away on black crags of the Pyrenees, telling of his great towers: almost it might have

seemed he was speaking of mountains. And when the fire was only a deep red glow and white ash showed all round it, and he ceased speaking, having told of a castle marvellous even amongst the towers of Spain: all sitting round the embers felt sad with his sadness, for his sad voice drifted into their very spirits as white mists enter houses, and all were glad when Rodriguez said to him that one of his ten tall towers the captive should keep and should live in it for ever. And the sad man thanked him sadly and showed no joy.

When the tale of the castle and those great towers was done, the wind that blew from the snow touched all the hearers; they had seemed to be away by the bank of the Ebro in the heat and light of Spain, and now the vast night stripped them and the peaks seemed to close round on them. They wrapped themselves in blankets and lay down in their shelters. For a while they heard the wind waving branches and the thump of a horse's hoof restless at night; then they all slept except one that guarded the captive, and the captive himself who long lay thinking and thinking.

Dawn stole through the wood and waked none of the sleepers; the birds all shouted at them, still they slept on; and then the captive's guard wakened Morano and he stirred up the sparks of the fire and cooked, and they breakfasted late. And soon they left the wood and faced the bleak slope, all of them going on foot and leading their horses.

And the track crawled on till it came to the scorn of the peaks, winding over a shoulder of the Pyrenees, where the peaks gaze cold and contemptuous away from the things of man.

In the presence of those that bore them company Rodriguez and Morano felt none of the deadly majesty of those peaks that regard so awfully over the solitudes. They passed through them telling cheerfully of wars the four knights had known: and descended and came by sunset to the lower edge of the snow. They pushed on a little farther and then camped; and with branches from the last camp that they had heaped on their horses they made another great fire and, huddling round it in the blankets that they had brought, found warmth even there so far from the hearths of men.

And dawn and the cold woke them all on that treeless slope by barely warm embers. Morano cooked again and they ate in silence. And then the four knights rose sadly and one bowed and told Rodriguez how they must now go back to their own country. And grief seized on Rodriguez at his words, seeing that he was to lose four old friends at once and perhaps for

ever, for when men have fought under the same banner in war they become old friends on that morning.

"Señors," said Rodriguez, "we may never meet again!"

And the other looked back to the peaks beyond which the far lands lay, and made a gesture with his hands.

"Señor, at least," said Rodriguez, "let us camp once more together."

And even Morano babbled a supplication.

"Methinks, señor," he answered, "we are already across the frontier, and when we men of the sword cross frontiers misunderstandings arise, so that it is our custom never to pass across them save when we push the frontier with us, adding the lands over which we march to those of our liege lord."

"Señors," said Rodriguez, "the whole mountain is the frontier. Come with us one day further." But they would not stay.

All the good things that could be carried they loaded on to the three horses whose heads were turned towards Spain; then turned, all four, and said farewell to the three. And long looked each in the face of Rodriguez as he took his hand in fare well, for they had fought under the same banner and, as wayfaring was in those days, it was not likely that they would ever meet again. They turned and went with their horses back towards the land they had fought for.

Rodriguez and his captive and Morano went sadly down the mountain. They came to the fir woods, and rested, and Morano cooked their dinner. And after a while they were able to ride their horses.

They came to the foot of the mountains, and rode on past the Inn of the World's End. They camped in the open; and all night long Rodriguez or Morano guarded the captive.

For two days and part of the third they followed their old course, catching sight again and again of the river Segre; and then they turned further west ward to come to Aragon further up the Ebro. All the way they avoided houses and camped in the open, for they kept their captive to themselves: and they slept warm with their ample store of blankets. And all the while the captive seemed morose or ill at ease, speaking seldom and, when he did, in nervous jerks.

Morano, as they rode, or by the camp fire at evening, still questioned him now and then about his castle; and sometimes he almost seemed to contradict himself, but in so vast a castle may have been many styles of architecture, and it was difficult to trace a contradiction among all those

towers and turrets. His name was Don Alvidar-of-the-Rose-pink-Castle on-Ebro.

One night while all three sat and gazed at the camp-fire as men will, when the chilly stars are still and the merry flames are leaping, Rodriguez, seeking to cheer his captive's mood, told him some of his strange adventures. The captive listened with his sombre air. But when Rodriguez told how they woke on the mountain after their journey to the sun; and the sun was shining on their faces in the open, but the magician and his whole house were gone; then there came another look into Alvidar's eyes. And Rodriguez ended his tale and silence fell, broken only by Morano saying across the fire, "It is true," and the captive's thoughtful eyes gazed into the darkness. And then he also spoke.

"Señor," he said, "near to my rose-pink castle which looks into the Ebro dwells a magician also."

"Is it so?" said Rodriguez.

"Indeed so, señor," said Don Alvidar. "He is my enemy but dwells in awe of me, and so durst never molest me except by minor wonders."

"How know you that he is a magician?" said Rodriguez.

"By those wonders," answered his captive. "He afflicts small dogs and my poultry. And he wears a thin, high hat: his beard is also extraordinary."

"Long?" said Morano.

"Green," answered Don Alvidar.

"Is he very near the castle?" said Rodriguez and Morano together.

"Too near," said Don Alvidar.

"Is his house wonderful?" Rodriguez asked.

"It is a common house," was the answer. "A mean, long house of one story. The walls are white and it is well thatched. The windows are painted green; there are two doors in it and by one of them grows a rose tree."

"A rose tree?" exclaimed Rodriguez.

"It seemed a rose tree," said Don Alvidar.

"A captive lady chained to the wall perhaps, changed by magic," suggested Morano.

"Perhaps," said Don Alvidar.

"A strange house for a magician," said Rodriguez, for it sounded like any small farmhouse in Spain.

"He much affects mortal ways," replied Don Alvidar.

Little more was then said, the fire being low: and Rodriguez lay down to sleep while Morano guarded the captive.

And the day after that they came to Aragon, and in one day more they were across the Ebro; and then they rode west for a day along its southern bank looking all the while as they rode for Rodriguez' castle. And more and more silent and aloof, as they rode, grew Don Alvidar-of-the-Rose-pink-Castle-on-Ebro.

And just before sunset a cry broke from the captive. "He has taken it!" he said. And he pointed to just such a house as he had described, a jolly Spanish farmhouse with white walls and thatch and green shutters, and a rose tree by one of the doors just as he had told.

"The magician's house. But the castle is gone," he said.

Rodriguez looked at his face and saw real alarm in it. He said nothing but rode on in haste, a dim hope in his mind that explanations at the white cottage might do something for his lost castle.

And when the hooves were heard a woman came out of the cottage door by the rose tree leading a small child by the hand. And the captive called to the woman, "Maria, we are lost. And I gave my great castle with rose-pink towers that stood just here as ransom to this señor for my life. But now, alas, I see that that magician who dwelt in the house where you are now has taken it whither we know not."

"Yes, Pedro," said the woman, "he took it yesterday." And she turned blue eyes upon Rodriguez.

And then Morano would be silent no longer. He had thought vaguely for some days and intensely for the last few hundreds yards, and now he blurted out the thoughts that boiled in him.

"Master," he shouted, "he has sold his cattle and bought this raiment of his, and that helmet that you opened up for him, and never had any castle on the Ebro with any towers to it, and never knew any magician, but lived in this house himself, and now your castle is gone, master, and as for his life ..."

"Be silent a moment, Morano," said Rodriguez, and he turned to the woman whose eyes were on him still.

"Was there a castle in this place?" he said.

"Yes, señor. I swear it," she said. "And my husband, though a poor man, always spoke the truth."

"She lies," said Morano, and Rodriguez silenced him with a gesture.

“I will get neighbours who will swear it too,” she said.

“A lousy neighbourhood,” said Morano.

Again Rodriguez silenced him. And then the child spoke in a frightened voice, holding up a small cross that it had been taught to revere. “I swear it too,” it said.

Rodriguez heaved a sigh and turned away. “Master,” Morano cried in pained astonishment, “you will not believe their swearings.”

“The child swore by the cross,” he answered.

“But, master!” Morano exclaimed.

But Rodriguez would say no more. And they rode away aimless in silence.

Galloping hooves were heard and Pedro was there. He had come to give up his horse. He gave its reins to the scowling Morano but Rodriguez said never a word. Then he ran round and kissed Rodriguez’ hand, who still was silent, for his hopes were lost with the castle; but he nodded his head and so parted for ever from the man whom his wife called Pedro, who called himself Don Alvidar-of-the-Rose-pink-Castle-on-Ebro.

THE TENTH CHRONICLE

HOW HE CAME BACK TO LOWLIGHT

“Master,” Morano said. But Rodriguez rode ahead and would not speak.

They were riding vaguely southward. They had ample provisions on the horse that Morano led, as well as blankets, which gave them comfort at night. That night they both got the sleep they needed, now that there was no captive to guard. All the next day they rode slowly in the April weather by roads that wandered among tended fields; but a little way off from the fields there shone low hills in the sunlight, so wild, so free of man, that Rodriguez remembering them in later years, wondered if their wild shrubs just hid the frontiers of fairyland.

For two days they rode by the edge of unguessable regions. Had Pan piped there no one had marvelled, nor though fauns had scurried past sheltering clumps of azaleas. In the twilight no tiny queens had court within rings of toadstools: yet almost, almost they appeared.

And on the third day all at once they came to a road they knew. It was the road by which they had ridden when Rodriguez still had his dream, the way from Shadow Valley to the Ebro. And so they turned into the road they knew, as wanderers always will; and, still without aim or plan, they faced towards Shadow Valley. And in the evening of the day that followed that, as they looked about for a camping-ground, there came in sight the village on the hill which Rodriguez knew to be fifty miles from the forest: it was the village in which they had rested the first night after leaving Shadow Valley. They did not camp but went on to the village and knocked at the door of the inn. Habit guides us all at times, even kings are the slaves of it (though in their presence it takes the prouder name of precedent); and here were two wanderers without any plans at all; they were therefore defenceless in the grip of habit and, seeing an inn they knew, they loitered up to it. Mine host came again to the door. He cheerfully asked Rodriguez how he had fared on his journey, but Rodriguez would say nothing. He asked for lodging for himself and Morano and stabling for the horses: he ate and slept and paid his due, and in the morning was gone.

Whatever impulses guided Rodriguez as he rode and Morano followed, he knew not what they were or even that there could be any. He followed

the road without hope and only travelled to change his camping-grounds. And that night he was half-way between the village and Shadow Valley.

Morano never spoke, for he saw that his master's disappointment was still raw; but it pleased him to notice, as he had done all day, that they were heading for the great forest. He cooked their evening meal in their camp by the wayside and they both ate it in silence. For awhile Rodriguez sat and gazed at the might-have-beens in the camp-fire: and when these began to be hidden by white ash he went to his blankets and slept. And Morano went quietly about the little camp, doing all that needed to be done, with never a word. When the horses were seen to and fed, when the knives were cleaned, when everything was ready for the start next morning, Morano went to his blankets and slept too. And in the morning again they wandered on.

That evening they saw the low gold rays of the sun enchanting the tops of a forest. It almost surprised Rodriguez, travelling without an aim, to recognise Shadow Valley. They quickened their slow pace and, before twilight faded, they were under the great oaks; but the last of the twilight could not pierce the dimness of Shadow Valley, and it seemed as if night had entered the forest with them.

They chose a camping-ground as well as they could in the darkness and Morano tied the horses to trees a little way off from the camp. Then he returned to Rodriguez and tied a blanket to the windward side of two trees to make a kind of bedroom for his master, for they had all the blankets they needed. And when this was done he set the emblem and banner of camps, anywhere all over the world in any time, for he gathered sticks and branches and lit a camp-fire. The first red flames went up and waved and proclaimed a camp: the light made a little circle, shadows ran away to the forest, and the circle of light on the ground and on the trees that stood round it became for that one night home.

They heard the horses stamp as they always did in the early part of the night; and then Morano went to give them their fodder. Rodriguez sat and gazed into the fire, his mind as full of thoughts as the fire was full of pictures: one by one the pictures in the fire fell in; and all his thoughts led nowhere.

He heard Morano running back the thirty or forty yards he had gone from the camp-fire "Master," Morano said, "the three horses are gone."

"Gone?" said Rodriguez. There was little more to say; it was too dark to track them and he knew that to find three horses in Shadow Valley was a

task that might take years. And after more thought than might seem to have been needed he said; “We must go on foot.”

“Have we far to go, master?” said Morano, for the first time daring to question him since they left the cottage in Spain.

“I have nowhere to go,” said Rodriguez. His head was downcast as he sat by the fire: Morano stood and looked at him unhappily, full of a sympathy that he found no words to express. A light wind slipped through the branches and everything else was still. It was some while before he lifted his head; and then he saw before him on the other side of the fire, standing with folded arms, the man in the brown leather jacket.

“Nowhere to go!” said he. “Who needs go anywhere from Shadow Valley?”

Rodriguez stared at him. “But I can’t stay here!” he said.

“There is no fairer forest known to man,” said the other. “I know many songs that prove it.”

Rodriguez made no answer but dropped his eyes, gazing with listless glance once more at the ground. “Come, señor,” said the man in the leather jacket. “None are unhappy in Shadow Valley.”

“Who are you?” said Rodriguez. Both he and Morano were gazing curiously at the man whom they had saved three weeks ago from the noose.

“Your friend,” answered the stranger.

“No friend can help me,” said Rodriguez.

“Señor,” said the stranger across the fire, still standing with folded arms, “I remain under an obligation to no man. If you have an enemy or love a lady, and if they dwell within a hundred miles, either shall be before you within a week.”

Rodriguez shook his head, and silence fell by the camp-fire. And after awhile Rodriguez, who was accustomed to dismiss a subject when it was ended, saw the stranger’s eyes on him yet, still waiting for him to say more. And those clear blue eyes seemed to do more than wait, seemed almost to command, till they overcame Rodriguez’ will and he obeyed and said, although he could feel each word struggling to stay unuttered, “Señor, I went to the wars to win a castle and a piece of land thereby; and might perchance have wed and ended my wanderings, with those of my servant here; but the wars are over and no castle is won.”

And the stranger saw by his face in the firelight, and knew from the tones of his voice in the still night, the trouble that his words had not

expressed.

"I remain under an obligation to no man," said the stranger. "Be at this place in four weeks' time, and you shall have a castle as large as any that men win by war, and a goodly park thereby."

"Your castle, master!" said Morano delighted, whose only thought up to then was as to who had got his horses. But Rodriguez only stared: and the stranger said no more but turned on his heel. And then Rodriguez awoke out of his silence and wonder. "But where?" he said. "What castle?"

"That you will see," said the stranger.

"But, but how ..." said Rodriguez. What he meant was, "How can I believe you?" but he did not put it in words.

"My word was never broken," said the other. And that is a good boast to make, for those of us who can make it; if we need boast at all.

"Whose word?" said Rodriguez, looking him in the eyes.

The smoke from the fire between them was thickening greyly as though something had been cast on it. "The word," he said, "of the King of Shadow Valley."

Rodriguez gazing through the increasing smoke saw not to the other side. He rose and walked round the fire, but the strange man was gone.

Rodriguez came back to his place by the fire and sat long there in silence. Morano was bubbling over to speak, but respected his master's silence: for Rodriguez was gazing into the deeps of the fire seeing pictures there that were brighter than any that he had known. They were so clear now that they seemed almost true. He saw Serafina's face there looking full at him. He watched it long until other pictures hid it, visions that had no meaning for Rodriguez. And not till then he spoke. And when he spoke his face was almost smiling.

"Well, Morano," he said, "have we come by that castle at last?"

"That man does not lie, master," he answered: and his eyes were glittering with shrewd conviction.

"What shall we do then?" said Rodriguez.

"Let us go to some village, master," said Morano, "until the time he said."

"What village?" Rodriguez asked.

"I know not, master," answered Morano, his face a puzzle of innocence and wonder; and Rodriguez fell back into thought again. And the dancing flames calmed down to a deep, quiet glow; and soon Rodriguez stepped

back a yard or two from the fire to where Morano had prepared his bed; and, watching the fire still, and turning over thoughts that flashed and changed as fast as the embers, he went to wonderful dreams that were no more strange or elusive than that valley's wonderful king.

When he spoke in the morning the camp-fire was newly lit and there was a smell of bacon; and Morano, out of breath and puzzled, was calling to him.

"Master," he said, "I was mistaken about those horses."

"Mistaken?" said Rodriguez.

"They were just as I left them, master, all tied to the tree with my knots."

Rodriguez left it at that. Morano could make mistakes and the forest was full of wonders: anything might happen. "We will ride," he said.

Morano's breakfast was as good as ever; and, when he had packed up those few belongings that make a dwelling-place of any chance spot in the wilderness, they mounted the horses, which were surely there, and rode away through sunlight and green leaves. They rode slow, for the branches were low over the path, and whoever canters in a forest and closes his eyes against a branch has to consider whether he will open them to be whipped by the next branch or close them till he bumps his head into a tree. And it suited Rodriguez to loiter, for he thought thus to meet the King of Shadow Valley again or his green bowmen and learn the answers to innumerable questions about his castle which were wandering through his mind.

They ate and slept at noon in the forest's glittering greenness.

They passed afterwards by the old house in the wood, in which the bowmen feasted, for they followed the track that they had taken before. They knocked loud on the door as they passed but the house was empty. They heard the sound of a multitude felling trees, but whenever they approached the sound of chopping ceased. Again and again they left the track and rode towards the sound of chopping, and every time the chopping died away just as they drew close. They saw many a tree half felled, but never a green bowman. And at last they left it as one of the wonders of the forest and returned to the track lest they lose it, for the track was more important to them than curiosity, and evening had come and was filling the forest with dimness, and shadows stealing across the track were beginning to hide it away. In the distance they heard the invisible woodmen chopping.

And then they camped again and lit their fire; and night came down and the two wanderers slept.

The nightingale sang until he woke the cuckoo: and the cuckoo filled the leafy air so full of his two limpid notes that the dreams of Rodriguez heard them and went away, back over their border to dreamland. Rodriguez awoke Morano, who lit his fire: and soon they had struck their camp and were riding on.

By noon they saw that if they hurried on they could come to Lowlight by nightfall. But this was not Rodriguez' plan, for he had planned to ride into Lowlight, as he had done once before, at the hour when Serafina sat in her balcony in the cool of the evening, as Spanish ladies in those days sometimes did. So they tarried long by their resting-place at noon and then rode slowly on. And when they camped that night they were still in the forest.

"Morano," said Rodriguez over the camp-fire, "tomorrow brings me to Lowlight."

"Aye, master," said Morano, "we shall be there tomorrow."

"That señor with whom I had a meeting there," said Rodriguez, "he ..."

"He loves me not," said Morano.

"He would surely kill you," replied Rodriguez.

Morano looked sideways at his frying-pan.

"It would therefore be better," continued Rodriguez, "that you should stay in this camp while I give such greetings of ceremony in Lowlight as courtesy demands."

"I will stay, master," said Morano.

Rodriguez was glad that this was settled, for he felt that to follow his dreams of so many nights to that balconied house in Lowlight with Morano would be no better than visiting a house accompanied by a dog that had bitten one of the family.

"I will stay," repeated Morano. "But, master ..." The fat man's eyes were all supplication.

"Yes?" said Rodriguez.

"Leave me your mandolin," implored Morano.

"My mandolin?" said Rodriguez.

"Master," said Morano, "that señor who likes my fat body so ill he would kill me, he ..."

"Well?" said Rodriguez, for Morano was hesitating.

"He likes your mandolin no better, master."

Rodriguez resented a slight to his mandolin as much as a slight to his sword, but he smiled as he looked at Morano's anxious face.

"He would kill you for your mandolin," Morano went on eagerly, "as he would kill me for my frying-pan."

And at the mention of that frying-pan Rodriguez frowned, although it had given him many a good meal since the night it offended in Lowlight. And he would sooner have gone to the wars without a sword than under the balcony of his heart's desire without a mandolin.

So Rodriguez would hear no more of Morano's request; and soon he left the fire and went to lie down; but Morano sighed and sat gazing on into the embers unhappily; while thoughts plodded slow through his mind, leading to nothing. Late that night he threw fresh logs on the camp-fire, so that when they awoke there was still fire in the embers And when they had eaten their breakfast Rodriguez said farewell to Morano, saying that he had business in Lowlight that might keep him a few days. But Morano said not farewell then, for he would follow his master as far as the midday halt to cook his next meal. And when noon came they were beyond the forest.

Once more Morano cooked bacon. Then while Rodriguez slept Morano took his cloak and did all that could be done by brushing and smoothing to give back to it that air that it some time had, before it had flapped upon so many winds and wrapped Rodriguez on such various beds, and met the vicissitudes that make this story.

For the plume he could do little.

And his master awoke, late in the afternoon, and went to his horse and gave Morano his orders. He was to go back with two of the horses to their last camp in the forest and take with him all their kit except one blanket and make himself comfortable there and wait till Rodriguez came.

And then Rodriguez rode slowly away, and Morano stood gazing mournfully and warningly at the mandolin; and the warnings were not lost upon Rodriguez, though he would never admit that he saw in Morano's staring eyes any wise hint that he heeded.

And Morano sighed, and went and untethered his horses; and soon he was riding lonely back to the forest. And Rodriguez taking the other way saw at once the towers of Lowlight.

Does my reader think that he then set spurs to his horse, galloping towards that house about whose balcony his dreams flew every night? No, it was far from evening; far yet from the colour and calm in which the light

with never a whisper says farewell to Earth, but with a gesture that the horizon hides takes silent leave of the fields on which she has danced with joy; far yet from the hour that shone for Serafina like a great halo round her and round her mother's house.

We cannot believe that one hour more than another shone upon Serafina, or that the dim end of the evening was only hers: but these are the Chronicles of Rodriguez, who of all the things that befell him treasured most his memory of Serafina in the twilight, and who held that this hour was hers as much as her raiment and her balcony: such therefore it is in these chronicles.

And so he loitered, waiting for the slow sun to set: and when at last a tint on the walls of Lowlight came with the magic of Earth's most faery hour he rode in slowly not perhaps wholly unwitting, for all his anxious thoughts of Serafina, that a little air of romance from the Spring and the evening followed this lonely rider.

From some way off he saw that balcony that had drawn him back from the other side of the far Pyrenees. Sometimes he knew that it drew him and mostly he knew it not; yet always that curved balcony brought him nearer, ever since he turned from the field of the false Don Alvidar: the balcony held him with invisible threads, such as those with which Earth draws in the birds at evening. And there was Serafina in her balcony.

When Rodriguez saw Serafina sitting there in the twilight, just as he had often dreamed, he looked no more but lowered his head to the withered rose that he carried now in his hand, the rose that he had found by that very balcony under another moon. And, gazing still at the rose, he rode on under the balcony, and passed it, until his hoof-beats were heard no more in Lowlight and he and his horse were one dim shape between the night and the twilight. And still he held on.

He knew not yet, but only guessed, who had thrown that rose from the balcony on the night when he slept on the dust: he knew not who it was that he fought on the same night, and dared not guess what that unknown hidalgo might be to Serafina. He had no claim to more from that house, which once gave him so cold a welcome, than thus to ride by it in silence. And he knew as he rode that the cloak and the plume that he wore scarce seemed the same as those that had floated by when more than a month ago he had ridden past that balcony; and the withered rose that he carried added one more note of autumn. And yet he hoped.

And so he rode into twilight and was hid from the sight of the village, a worn, pathetic figure, trusting vaguely to vague powers of good fortune that govern all men, but that favour youth.

And, sure enough, it was not yet wholly moonlight when cantering hooves came down the road behind him. It was once more that young hidalgo. And as soon as he drew rein beside Rodriguez both reached out merry hands as though their former meeting had been some errand of joy. And as Rodriguez looked him in the eyes, while the two men leaned over clasping hands, in light still clear though faded, he could not doubt Serafina was his sister.

"Señor," said his old enemy, "will you tarry with us, in our house a few days, if your journey is not urgent?"

Rodriguez gasped for joy; for the messenger from Lowlight, the certainty that here was no rival, the summons to the house of his dreams' pilgrimage, came all together: his hand still clasped the stranger's. Yet he answered with the due ceremony that that age and land demanded: then they turned and rode together towards Lowlight. And first the young men told each other their names; and the stranger told how he dwelt with his mother and sister in the house that Rodriguez knew, and his name was Don Alderon of the Valley of Dawnlight. His house had dwelt in that valley since times out of knowledge; but then the Moors had come and his forbears had fled to Lowlight: the Moors were gone now, for which Saint Michael and all fighting Saints be praised; but there were certain difficulties about his right to the Valley of Dawnlight. So they dwelt in Lowlight still.

And Rodriguez told of the war that there was beyond the Pyrenees and how the just cause had won, but little more than that he was able to tell, for he knew scarce more of the cause for which he had fought than History knows of it, who chooses her incidents and seems to forget so much. And as they talked they came to the house with the balcony. A waning moon cast light over it that was now no longer twilight; but was the light of wild things of the woods, and birds of prey, and men in mountains outlawed by the King, and magic, and mystery, and the quests of love. Serafina had left her place: lights gleamed now in the windows. And when the door was opened the hall seemed to Rodriguez so much less hugely hollow, so much less full of ominous whispered echoes, that his courage rose high as he went through it with Alderon, and they entered the room together that they had entered together before. In the long room beyond many candles he saw

Dona Serafina and her mother rising up to greet him. Neither the ceremonies of that age nor Rodriguez' natural calm would have entirely concealed his emotion had not his face been hidden as he bowed. They spoke to him; they asked him of his travels; Rodriguez answered with effort. He saw by their manner that Don Alderon must have explained much in his favour. He had this time, to cheer him, a very different greeting; and yet he felt little more at ease than when he had stood there late at night before, with one eye bandaged and wearing only one shoe, suspected of he knew not what brawling and violence.

It was not until Dona Mirana, the mother of Serafina, asked him to play to them on his mandolin that Rodriguez' ease returned. He bowed then and brought round his mandolin, which had been slung behind him; and knew a triumphant champion was by him now, one old in the ways of love and wise in the sorrows of man, a slender but potent voice, well-skilled to tell what there were not words to say; a voice unhindered by language, unlimited even by thought, whose universal meaning was heard and understood, sometimes perhaps by wandering spirits of light, beaten far by some evil thought for their heavenly courses and passing close along the coasts of Earth.

And Rodriguez played no tune he had ever known, nor any airs that he had heard men play in lanes in Andalusia; but he told of things that he knew not, of sadnesses that he had scarcely felt and undreamed exaltations. It was the hour of need, and the mandolin knew.

And when all was told that the mandolin can tell of whatever is wistfulest in the spirit of man, a mood of merriment entered its old curved sides and there came from its hollows a measure such as they dance to when laughter goes over the greens in Spain. Never a song sang Rodriguez; the mandolin said all.

And what message did Serafina receive from those notes that were strange even to Rodriguez? Were they not stranger to her? I have said that spirits blown far out of their course and nearing the mundane coasts hear mortal music sometimes, and hearing understand. And if they cannot understand those snatches of song, all about mortal things and human needs, that are wafted rarely to them by chance passions, how much more surely a young mortal heart, so near Rodriguez, heard what he would say and understood the message however strange.

When Dona Mirana and her daughter rose, exchanging their little curtsies for the low bows of Rodriguez, and so retired for the night, the long room seemed to Rodriguez now empty of threatening omens. The great portraits that the moon had lit, and that had frowned at him in the moonlight when he came here before, frowned at him now no longer. The anger that he had known to lurk in the darkness on pictured faces of dead generations had gone with the gloom that it haunted: they were all passionless now in the quiet light of the candles. He looked again at the portraits eye to eye, remembering looks they had given him in the moonlight, and all looked back at him with ages of apathy; and he knew that whatever glimmer of former selves there lurks about portraits of the dead and gone was thinking only of their own past days in years remote from Rodriguez. Whether their anger had flashed for a moment over the ages on that night a month from now, or whether it was only the moonlight, he never knew. Their spirits were back now surely amongst their own days, whence they deigned not to look on the days that make these chronicles.

Not till then did Rodriguez admit, or even know, that he had not eaten since his noonday meal. But now he admitted this to Don Alderon's questions; and Don Alderon led him to another chamber and there regaled him with all the hospitality for which that time was famous. And when Rodriguez had eaten, Don Alderon sent for wine, and the butler brought it in an olden flagon, dark wine of a precious vintage: and soon the two young men were drinking together and talking of the wickedness of the Moors. And while they talked the night grew late and chilly and still, and the hour came when moths are fewer and young men think of bed. Then Don Alderon showed his guest to an upper room, a long room dim with red hangings, and carvings in walnut and oak, which the one candle he carried barely lit but only set queer shadows scampering. And here he left Rodriguez, who was soon in bed, with the great red hangings round him. And awhile he wondered at the huge silence of the house all round him, with never a murmur, never an echo, never a sigh; for he missed the passing of winds, branches waving, the stirring of small beasts, birds of prey calling, and the hundred sounds of the night; but soon through the silence came sleep.

He did not need to dream, for here in the home of Serafina he had come to his dreams' end.

Another day shone on another scene; for the sunlight that went in a narrow stream of gold and silver between the huge red curtains had sent away the shadows that had stalked overnight through the room, and had scattered the eeriness that had lurked on the far side of furniture, and all the dimness was gone that the long red room had harboured. And for a while Rodriguez did not know where he was; and for a while, when he remembered, he could not believe it true. He dressed with care, almost with fear, and preened his small moustachios, which at last had grown again just when he would have despaired. Then he descended, and found that he had slept late, though the three of that ancient house were seated yet at the table, and Serafina all dressed in white seemed to Rodriguez to be shining in rivalry with the morning. Ah dreams and fancies of youth!

THE ELEVENTH CHRONICLE

HOW HE TURNED TO GARDENING AND HIS SWORD RESTED

These were the days that Rodriguez always remembered; and, side by side with them, there lodged in his memory, and went down with them into his latter years, the days and nights when he went through the Pyrenees and walked when he would have slept but had to walk or freeze: and by some queer rule that guides us he treasured them both in his memory, these happy days in this garden and the frozen nights on the peaks.

For Serafina showed Rodriguez the garden that behind the house ran narrow and long to the wild. There were rocks with heliotrope pouring over them and flowers peeping behind them, and great azaleas all in triumphant bloom, and ropes of flowering creepers coming down from trees, and oleanders, and a plant named popularly Joy of the South, and small paths went along it edged with shells brought from the far sea.

There was only one street in the village, and you did not go far among the great azaleas before you lost sight of the gables; and you did not go far before the small paths ended with their shells from the distant sea, and there was the mistress of all gardeners facing you, Mother Nature nursing her children, the things of the wild. She too had azaleas and oleanders, but they stood more solitary in their greater garden than those that grew in the garden of Dona Mirana; and she too had little paths, only they were without borders and without end. Yet looking from the long and narrow garden at the back of that house in Lowlight to the wider garden that sweeps round the world, and is fenced by Space from the garden in Venus and by Space from the garden in Mars, you scarce saw any difference or noticed where they met: the solitary azaleas beyond were gathered together by distance, and from Lowlight to the horizon seemed all one garden in bloom. And afterwards, all his years, whenever Rodriguez heard the name of Spain, spoken by loyal men, it was thus that he thought of it, as he saw it now.

And here he used to walk with Serafina when she tended flowers in the cool of the morning or went at evening to water favourite blooms. And Rodriguez would bring with him his mandolin, and sometimes he touched it lightly or even sang, as they rested on some carved seat at the garden's end, looking out towards shadowy shrubs on the shining hill, but mostly he

heard her speak of the things she loved, of what moths flew to their garden, and which birds sang, and how the flowers grew. Serafina sat no longer in her balcony but, disguising idleness by other names, they loitered along those paths that the seashells narrowed; yet there was a grace in their loitering such as we have not in our dances now. And evening stealing in from the wild places, from darkening azaleas upon distant hills, still found them in the garden, found Rodriguez singing in idleness undisguised, or anxiously helping in some trivial task, tying up some tendril that had gone awry, helping some magnolia that the wind had wounded. Almost unnoticed by him the sunlight would disappear, and the coloured blaze of the sunset, and then the gloaming; till the colours of all the flowers queerly changed and they shone with that curious glow which they wear in the dusk. They returned then to the house, the garden behind them with its dim hushed air of a secret, before them the candlelight like a different land. And after the evening meal Alderon and Rodriguez would sit late together discussing the future of the world, Rodriguez holding that it was intended that the earth should be ruled by Spain, and Alderon fearing it would all go to the Moors.

Days passed thus.

And then one evening Rodriguez was in the garden with Serafina; the flowers, dim and pale and more mysterious than ever, poured out their scent towards the coming night, luring huge hawk-moths from the far dusk that was gathering about the garden, to hover before each bloom on myriad wingbeats too rapid for human eye: another inch and the fairies had peeped out from behind azaleas, yet both of these late loiterers felt fairies were surely there: it seemed to be Nature’s own most secret hour, upon which man trespasses if he venture forth from his house: an owl from his hidden haunt flew nearer the garden and uttered a clear call once to remind Rodriguez of this: and Rodriguez did not heed, but walked in silence.

He had played his mandolin. It had uttered to the solemn hush of the understanding evening all it was able to tell; and after that cry, grown piteous with so many human longings, for it was an old mandolin, Rodriguez felt there was nothing left for his poor words to say. So he went dumb and mournful.

Serafina would have heard him had he spoken, for her thoughts vibrated yet with the voice of the mandolin, which had come to her hearing as an ambassador from Rodriguez, but he found no words to match with the

mandolin's high mood. His eyes said, and his sighs told, what the mandolin had uttered; but his tongue was silent.

And then Serafina said, as he walked all heavy with silence past a curving slope of dimly glowing azaleas, "You like flowers, señor?"

"Señorita, I adore them," he replied.

"Indeed?" said Dona Serafina.

"Indeed I do," said Rodriguez.

"And yet," asked Dona Serafina, "was it not a somewhat withered or altogether faded flower that you carried, unless I fancied wrong, when you rode past our balcony?"

"It was indeed faded," said Rodriguez, "for the rose was some weeks old."

"One who loved flowers, I thought," said Serafina, "would perhaps care more for them fresh."

Half-dumb though Rodriguez was his shrewdness did not desert him. To have said that he had the rose from Serafina would have been to claim as though proven what was yet no more than a hope.

"Señorita," he said, "I found the flower on holy ground."

"I did not know," she said, "that you had travelled so far."

"I found it here," he said, "under your balcony."

"Perchance I let it fall," said she. "It was idle of me."

"I guard it still," he said, and drew forth that worn brown rose.

"It was idle of me," said Serafina.

But then in that scented garden among the dim lights of late evening the ghost of that rose introduced their spirits one to the other, so that the listening flowers heard Rodriguez telling the story of his heart, and, bending over the shell-bordered path, heard Serafina's answer; and all they seemed to do was but to watch the evening, with leaves uplifted in the hope of rain.

Film after film of dusk dropped down from where twilight had been, like an army of darkness slowly pitching their tents on ground that had been lost to the children of light. Out of the wild lands all the owls flew nearer: their long, clear cries and the huge hush between them warned all those lands that this was not man's hour. And neither Rodriguez nor Serafina heard them.

In pale blue sky where none had thought to see it one smiling star appeared. It was Venus watching lovers, as men of the crumbled centuries had besought her to do, when they named her so long ago, kneeling upon

their hills with bended heads, and arms stretched out to her sweet eternal scrutiny. Beneath her wandering rays as they danced down to bless them Rodriguez and Serafina talked low in the sight of the goddess, and their voices swayed through the flowers with whispers and winds, not troubling the little wild creatures that steal out shy in the dusk, and Nature forgave them for being abroad in that hour; although, so near that a single azalea seemed to hide it, so near seemed to beckon and whisper old Nature's eldest secret.

When flowers glimmered and Venus smiled and all things else were dim, they turned on one of those little paths hand in hand homeward.

Dona Mirana glanced once at her daughter's eyes and said nothing. Don Alderon renewed his talk with Rodriguez, giving reasons for his apprehension of the conquest of the world by the Moors, which he had thought of since last night; and Rodriguez agreed with all that Don Alderon said, but understood little, being full of dreams that seemed to dance on the further, side of the candlelight to a strange, new, unheard tune that his heart was aware of. He gazed much at Serafina and said little.

He drank no wine that night with Don Alderon: what need had he of wine? On wonderful journeys that my pen cannot follow, for all the swiftness of the wing from which it came; on darting journeys outspeeding the lithe swallow or that great wanderer the white-fronted goose, his young thoughts raced by a myriad of golden evenings far down the future years. And what of the days he saw? Did he see them truly? Enough that he saw them in vision. Saw them as some lone shepherd on lifted downs sees once go by with music a galleon out of the East, with windy sails, and masts ablaze with pennants, and heroes in strange dress singing new songs; and the galleon goes nameless by till the singing dies away. What ship was it? Whither bound? Why there? Enough that he has seen it. Thus do we glimpse the glory of rare days as we swing round the sun; and youth is like some high headland from which to see.

On the next day he spoke with Dona Mirano. There was little to say but to observe the courtesies appropriate to this occasion, for Dona Mirana and her daughter had spoken long together already; and of one thing he could say little, and indeed was dumb when asked of it, and that was the question of his home. And then he said that he had a castle; and when Dona Mirana asked him where it was he said vaguely it was to the North. He trusted the word of the King of Shadow Valley and so he spoke of his castle as a man

speaks the truth. And when she asked him of his castle again, whether on rock or river or in leafy lands, he began to describe how its ten towers stood, being builded of a rock that was slightly pink, and how they glowed across a hundred fields, especially at evening; and suddenly he ceased, perceiving all in a moment he was speaking unwittingly in the words of Don Alvidar and describing to Dona Mirana that rose-pink castle on Ebro. And Dona Mirana knew then that there was some mystery about Rodriguez' home.

She spoke kindly to Rodriguez, yet she neither gave her consent nor yet withheld it, and he knew there was no immediate hope in her words. Graceful as were his bows as he withdrew, he left with scarcely another word to say. All day his castle hung over him like a cloud, not nebulous and evanescent only, but brooding darkly, boding storms, such as the orange blossoms dread.

He walked again in the garden with Serafina, but Dona Mirana was never far, and the glamour of the former evening, lit by one star, was driven from the garden by his anxieties about that castle of which he could not speak. Serafina asked him of his home. He would not parry her question, and yet he could not tell her that all their future hung on the promise of a man in an old leathern jacket calling himself a king. So the mystery of his habitation deepened, spoiling the glamour of the evening. He spoke, instead, of the forest, hoping she might know something of that strange monarch to whom they dwelt so near; but she glanced uneasily towards Shadow Valley and told him that none in Lowlight went that way. Sorrow grew heavier round Rodriguez' heart at this: believing in the promise of a man whose eyes he trusted he had asked Serafina to marry him, and Serafina had said Yes; and now he found she knew nothing of such a man, which seemed somehow to Rodriguez to weaken his promise, and, worst of all, she feared the place where he lived. He welcomed the approach of Dona Mirana, and all three returned to the house. For the rest of that evening he spoke little; but he had formed his project.

When the two ladies retired Rodriguez, who had seemed tongue-tied for many hours, turned to Don Alderon. His mother had told Don Alderon nothing yet; for she was troubled by the mystery of Rodriguez' castle, and would give him time to make it clear if he could; for there was something about Rodriguez of which with many pages I have tried to acquaint my reader but which was clear when first she saw him to Dona Mirana. In fact

she liked him at once, as I hope that perhaps by now my reader may. He turned to Don Alderon, who was surprised to see the vehemence with which his guest suddenly spoke after those hours of silence, and Rodriguez told him the story of his love and the story of both his castles, that which had vanished from the bank of the Ebro and that which was promised him by the King of Shadow Valley. And often Don Alderon interrupted.

"Oh, Rodriguez," he said, "you are welcome to our ancient, unfortunate house": and later he said, "I have met no man that had a prettier way with the sword."

But Rodriguez held on to the end, telling all he had to tell; and especially that he was landless and penniless but for that one promise; and as for the sword, he said, he was but as a child playing before the sword of Don Alderon. And this Don Alderon said was in no wise so, though there were a few cunning passes that he had learned, hoping that the day might come for him to do God a service thereby by slaying some of the Moors: and heartily he gave his consent and felicitation. But this Rodriguez would not have: "Come with me," he said, "to the forest to the place where I met this man, and if we find him not there we will go to the house in which his bowmen feast and there have news of him, and he shall show us the castle of his promise and, if it be such a castle as you approve, then your consent shall be given, but if not ..."

"Gladly indeed," said Don Alderon. "We will start tomorrow."

And Rodriguez took his words literally, though his host had meant no more than what we should call "one of these days," but Rodriguez was being consumed with a great impatience. And so they arranged it, and Don Alderon went to bed with a feeling, which is favourable to dreams, that on the next day they went upon an adventure; for neither he nor anyone in that village had entered Shadow Valley.

Once more next morning Rodriguez walked with Serafina, with something of the romance of the garden gone, for Dona Mirana walked there too; and romance is like one of those sudden, wonderful colours that flash for a moment out of a drop of dew; a passing shadow obscures them; and ask another to see it, and the colour is not the same: move but a yard and the ray of enchantment is gone. Dona Mirana saw the romance of that garden, but she saw it from thirty years away; it was all different what she saw, all changed from a certain day (for love was love in the old days): and to Rodriguez and Serafina it seemed that she could not see romance at all,

and somehow that dimmed it. Almost their eyes seemed to search amongst the azaleas for the romance of that other evening.

And then Rodriguez told Serafina that he was riding away with her brother to see about the affairs of his castle, and that they would return in a few days. Scarcely a hint he gave that those affairs might not prosper, for he trusted the word of the King of Shadow Valley. His confidence had returned: and soon, with swords at side and cloaks floating brilliant on light winds of April, Rodriguez and Alderon rode away together.

Soon in the distance they saw Shadow Valley. And then Rodriguez bethought him of Morano and of the foul wrong he committed against Don Alderon with his frying-pan, and how he was there in the camp to which he was bringing his friend. And so he said: "That vile knave Morano still lives and insists on serving me."

"If he be near," said Don Alderon, "I pray you to disarm him of his frying-pan for the sake of my honour, which does not suffer me to be stricken with culinary weapons, but only with the sword, the lance, or even bolts of cannon or arquebuss ..." He was thinking of yet more weapons when Rodriguez put spurs to his horse. "He is near," he said; "I will ride on and disarm him."

So Rodriguez came cantering into the forest while Don Alderon ambled a mile or so behind him.

And there he found his old camp and saw Morano, sitting upon the ground by a small fire. Morano sprang up at once with joy in his eyes, his face wreathed with questions, which he did not put into words for he did not pry openly into his master's affairs.

"Morano," said Rodriguez, "give me your frying-pan."

"My frying-pan?" said Morano.

"Yes," said Rodriguez. And when he held in his hand that blackened, greasy utensil he told Morano, "That señor you met in Lowlight rides with me."

The cheerfulness faded out of Morano's face as light fades at sunset. "Master," he said, "he will surely slay me now."

"He will not slay you," said Rodriguez.

"Master," Morano said, "he hopes for my fat carcase as much as men hope for the unicorn, when they wear their bright green coats and hunt him with dogs in Spring." I know not what legend Morano stored in his mind,

nor how much of it was true. “And when he finds me without my frying-pan he will surely slay me.”

“That señor,” said Rodriguez emphatically, “must not be hit with the frying-pan.”

“That is a hard rule, master,” said Morano.

And Rodriguez was indignant, when he heard that, that anyone should thus blaspheme against an obvious law of chivalry: while Morano’s only thought was upon the injustice of giving up the sweets of life for the sake of a frying-pan. Thus they were at cross-purposes. And for some while they stood silent, while Rodriguez hung the reins of his horse over the broken branch of a tree. And then Don Alderon rode into the wood.

All then that was most pathetic in Morano’s sense of injustice looked out of his eyes as he turned them upon his master. But Don Alderon scarcely glanced at all at Morano, even when he handed to him the reins of his horse as he walked on towards Rodriguez.

And there in that leafy place they rested all through the evening, for they had not started so early upon their journey as travellers should. Eight days had gone since Rodriguez had left that small camp to ride to Lowlight, and to the apex of his life towards which all his days had ascended; and in that time Morano had collected good store of wood and, in little ways unthought of by dwellers in cities, had made the place like such homes as wanderers find. Don Alderon was charmed with their roof of towering greenness, and with the choirs of those which inhabited it and which were now all coming home to sing. And at some moment in the twilight, neither Rodriguez nor Alderon noticed when, Morano repossessed himself of his frying-pan, unbidden by Rodriguez, but acting on a certain tacit permission that there seemed to be in the twilight or in the mood of the two young men as they sat by the fire. And soon he was cooking once more, at a fire of his own, with something of the air that you see upon a Field Marshal’s face who has lost his baton and found it again. Have you ever noticed it, reader?

And when the meal was ready Morano served it in silence, moving unobtrusively in the gloom of the wood; for he knew that he was forgiven, yet not so openly that he wished to insist on his presence or even to imply his possession of the weapon that fried the bacon. So, like a dryad he moved from tree to tree, and like any fabulous creature was gone again. And the two young men supped well, and sat on and on, watching the sparks go up on innumerable journeys from the fire at which they sat, to be lost to sight

in huge wastes of blackness and stars, lost to sight utterly, lost like the spirit of man to the gaze of our wonder when we try to follow its journey beyond the hearths that we know.

All the next day they rode on through the forest, till they came to the black circle of the old fire of their next camp. And here Rodriguez halted on account of the attraction that one of his old camps seems to have for a wanderer. It drew his feet towards it, this blackened circle, this hearth that for one night made one spot in the wilderness home. Don Alderon did not care whether they tarried or hurried; he loved his journey through this leafy land; the cool night-breeze slipping round the tree-trunks was new to him, and new was the comradeship of the abundant stars; the quest itself was a joy to him; with his fancy he built Rodriguez' mysterious castle no less magnificently than did Don Alvidar. Sometimes they talked of the castle, each of the young men picturing it as he saw it; but in the warmth of the camp-fire after Morano slept they talked of more than these chronicles can tell.

In the morning they pressed on as fast as the forest's low boughs would allow them. They passed somewhere near the great cottage in which the bowmen feasted; but they held on, as they had decided after discussion to do, for the last place in which Rodriguez had seen the King of Shadow Valley, which was the place of his promise. And before any dimness came even to the forest, or golden shafts down colonnades which were before all cathedrals, they found the old camp that they sought, which still had a clear flavour of magic for Morano on account of the moth-like coming and going of his three horses after he had tied them to that tree. And here they looked for the King of Shadow Valley; and then Rodriguez called him; and then all three of them called him, shouting "King of Shadow Valley" all together. No answer came: the woods were without echo: nothing stirred but fallen leaves. But before those miles of silence could depress them Rodriguez hit upon a simple plan, which was that he and Alderon should search all round, far from the track, while Morano stayed in the camp and shouted frequently, and they would not go out of hearing of his voice: for Shadow Valley had a reputation of being a bad forest for travellers to find their way there; indeed, few ever attempted to. So they did as he said, he and Alderon searching in different directions, while Morano remained in the camp, lifting a large and melancholy voice. And though rumour said it was hard to find the way when twenty yards from the track in Shadow Valley, it did not say it was

hard to find the green bowmen: and Rodriguez, knowing that they guarded the forest as the shadows of trees guard the coolness, was assured he would meet with some of them even though he should miss their master. So he and Alderon searched till the forest darkness came and only birds on high branches still had light; and they never saw the King of Shadow Valley or any trace whatever of any man. And Alderon first returned to the encampment; but Rodriguez searched on into the night, searching and calling through the darkness, and feeling, as every minute went by and every faint call of Morano, that his castle was fading away, slipping past oak-tree and thorn-bush, to take its place among the unpitying stars. And when he returned at last from his useless search he found Morano standing by a good fire, and the sight of it a little cheered Rodriguez, and the sight of the firelight on Morano's face, and the homely comfort of the camp, for everything is comparative.

And over their supper Rodriguez and Alderon agreed that they had come to a part of the forest too remote from the home of the King of Shadow Valley, and decided to go the next day to the house of the green bowmen: and before he slept Rodriguez felt once more that all was well with his castle.

Yet when the next day came they searched again, for Rodriguez remembered how it was to this very place that the King of Shadow Valley had bidden him come in four weeks, and though this period was not yet accomplished, he felt, and Alderon fully agreed, they had waited long enough: so they searched all the morning, and then fulfilled their decision of overnight by riding for the great cottage Rodriguez knew. All the way they met no one. And Rodriguez' gaiety came back as they rode, for he and Don Alderon recognised more and more clearly that the bowmen's great cottage was the place they should have gone at first.

In early evening they were just at their journey's end; but barely had they left the track that they had ridden the day before, barely taken the smaller path that led after a few hundred yards to the cottage when they found themselves stopped by huge chains that hung from tree to tree. High into the trees went the chains above their heads where they sat their horses, and a chain ran every six inches down to the very ground: the road was well blocked.

Rodriguez and Alderon hastily consulted; then, leaving the horses with Morano, they followed the chains through dense forest to find a place where

they could get the horses through. Finding the chains go on and on and on, and as evening was drawing in, the two friends divided, Alderon going back and Rodriguez on, agreeing to meet again on the path where Morano was.

It was darkening when they met there, Rodriguez having found nothing but that iron barrier going on from trunk to trunk, and Alderon having found a great gateway of iron; but it was shut. Through the silent shadows stealing abroad at evening the three men crashed their way on foot, leading their horses, towards this gate; but their way was slow and difficult for no path at all led up to it. It was dark when they reached it and they saw the high gate in the night, a black barrier among the trees where no one would wish to come, and in forest that seemed to these three to be nearly impenetrable. And what astonished Rodriguez most of all was that the chains had not been across the path when he had feasted with the green bowmen.

They stood there gazing, all three, at the dark locked gate, and then they saw two shields that met in the midst of it, and Rodriguez mounted his horse and stretched up to feel what device there was on the beaten iron; and both the shields were blank.

There they camped as well as men can when darkness has fallen before they reach their camping-ground; and Morano lit a great fire before the gate, and the smooth blank shields touching shoulders there up above them shone on Rodriguez and Alderon in the firelight. For a while they wondered at that strange gate that stood there dividing the wilderness; and then sleep came.

As soon as they woke they called loudly, but no one guarded that gate, no step but theirs stirred in the forest. Then, leaving Morano in the camp with its great gate that led nowhere, the two young men climbed up by branches and chains, and were soon on the other side of the gate and pressing on through the silence of the forest to find the cottage in which Rodriguez had slept. And almost at once the green bowmen appeared, ten of them with their bows, in front of Rodriguez and Alderon. “Stop,” said the ten green bowmen. When the bowmen said that, there was nothing else to do.

“What do you seek?” said the bowmen.

“The King of Shadow Valley,” answered Rodriguez.

“He is not here,” they said.

“Where is he?” asked Rodriguez.

“He is nowhere,” said one, “when he does not wish to be seen.”

“Then show me the castle that he promised me,” said Rodriguez.

“We know nothing of any castle,” said one of the bowmen, and they all shook their heads.

“No castle?” said Rodriguez.

“No,” they said.

“Has the King of Shadow Valley no castle?” he asked, beginning now to despair.

“We know of none,” they said. “He lives in the forest.”

Before Rodriguez quite despaired he asked each one if they knew not of any castle of which their King was possessed; and each of them said that there was no castle in all Shadow Valley. The ten still stood in front of them with their bows: and Rodriguez turned away then indeed in despair, and walked slowly back to the camp, and Alderon walked behind him. In silence they reached their camp by the great gate that led nowhere, and there Rodriguez sat down on a log beside the dwindling fire, gazing at the grey ashes and thinking of his dead hopes. He had not the heart to speak to Alderon, and the silence was unbroken by Morano who, for all his loquacity, knew when his words were not welcome. Don Alderon tried to break that melancholy silence, saying that these ten bowmen did not know the whole world; but he could not cheer Rodriguez. For, sitting there in dejection on his log, thinking of all the assurance with which he had often spoken of his castle, there was one more thing to trouble him than Don Alderon knew. And this was that when the bowmen had appeared he had hung once more round his neck that golden badge that was worked for him by the King of Shadow Valley; and they must have seen it, and they had paid no heed to it whatever: its magic was wholly departed. And one thing troubled him that Rodriguez did not know, a very potent factor in human sorrow: he had left in the morning so eagerly that he had had no breakfast, and this he entirely forgot and knew not how much of his dejection came from this cause, thinking that the loss of his castle was of itself enough.

So with downcast head he sat empty and hopeless, and the little camp was silent.

In this mournful atmosphere while no one spoke, and no one seemed to watch, stood, when at last Rodriguez raised his head, with folded arms before the gate to nowhere, the King of Shadow Valley. His face was surly, as though the face of a ghost, called from important work among asteroids needing his care, by the trivial legerdemain of some foolish novice.

Rodriguez, looking into those angry eyes, wholly forgot it was he that had a grievance. The silence continued. And then the King of Shadow Valley spoke.

"When have I broken my word?" he said.

Rodriguez did not know. The man was still looking at him, still standing there with folded arms before the great gate, confronting him, demanding some kind of answer: and Rodriguez had nothing to say.

"I came because you promised me the castle," he said at last.

"I did not bid you come here," the man with the folded arms answered.

"I went where you bade me," said Rodriguez, "and you were not there."

"In four weeks, I said," answered the King angrily.

And then Alderon spoke. "Have you any castle for my friend?" he said.

"No," said the King of Shadow Valley.

"You promised him one," said Don Alderon.

The King of Shadow Valley raised with his left hand a horn that hung below his elbow by a green cord round his body. He made no answer to Don Alderon, but put the horn against his lips and blew. They watched him all three in silence, till the silence was broken by many men moving swiftly through covert, and the green bowmen appeared.

When seven or eight were there he turned and looked at them. "When have I broken my word?" he said to his men.

And they all answered him, "Never!"

More broke into sight through the bushes.

"Ask them" he said. And Rodriguez did not speak.

"Ask them," he said again, "when I have broken my word."

Still Rodriguez and Alderon said nothing. And the bowmen answered them. "He has never broken his word," every bowman said.

"You promised me a castle," said Rodriguez, seeing that man's fierce eyes upon him still.

"Then do as I bid you," answered the King of Shadow Valley; and he turned round and touched the lock of the gates with some key that he had. The gates moved open and the King went through.

Don Alderon ran forward after him, and caught up with him as he strode away, and spoke to him, and the King answered. Rodriguez did not hear what they said, and never afterwards knew. These words he heard only, from the King of Shadow Valley as he and Don Alderon parted: ".... and therefore, señor, it were better for some holy man to do his blessed work

before we come." And the King of Shadow Valley passed into the deeps of the wood.

As the great gates were slowly swinging to, Don Alderon came back thoughtfully. The gates clanged, clicked, and were shut again. The King of Shadow Valley and all his bowmen were gone.

Don Alderon went to his horse, and Rodriguez and Morano did the same, drawn by the act of the only man of the three that seemed to have made up his mind. Don Alderon led his horse back toward the path, and Rodriguez followed with his. When they came to the path they mounted in silence; and presently Morano followed them, with his blankets rolled up in front of him on his horse and his frying-pan slung behind him.

"Which way?" said Rodriguez.

"Home," said Don Alderon.

"But I cannot go to your home," said Rodriguez.

"Come," said Don Alderon, as one whose plans were made. Rodriguez without a home, without plans, without hope, went with Don Alderon as thistledown goes with the warm wind. They rode through the forest till it grew all so dim that only a faint tinge of greenness lay on the dark leaves: above were patches of bluish sky like broken pieces of steel. And a star or two were out when they left the forest. And cantering on they came to Lowlight when the Milky Way appeared.

And there were Dona Mirana and Serafina in the hall to greet them as they entered the door.

"What news?" they asked.

But Rodriguez hung back; he had no news to give. It was Don Alderon that went forward, speaking cheerily to Serafina, and afterwards to his mother, with whom he spoke long and anxiously, pointing toward the forest sometimes, almost, as Rodriguez thought, in fear.

And a little later, when the ladies had retired, Don Alderon told Rodriguez over the wine, with which he had tried to cheer his forlorn companion, that it was arranged that he should marry Serafina. And when Rodriguez lamented that this was impossible he replied that the King of Shadow Valley wished it. And when Rodriguez heard this his astonishment equalled his happiness, for he marvelled that Don Alderon should not only believe that strange man's unsupported promise, but that he should even obey him as though he held him in awe.

And on the next day Rodriguez spoke with Dona Mirana as they walked in the glory of the garden. And Dona Mirana gave him her consent as Don Alderon had done: and when Rodriguez spoke humbly of postponement she glanced uneasily towards Shadow Valley, as though she too feared the strange man who ruled over the forest which she had never entered.

And so it was that Rodriguez walked with his lady, with the sweet Serafina in that garden again. And walking there they forgot the need of house or land, forgot Shadow Valley with its hopes and its doubts, and all the anxieties of the thoughts that we take for the morrow: and when evening came and the birds sang in azaleas, and the shadows grew solemn and long, and winds blew cool from the blazing bed of the Sun, into the garden now all strange and still, they forgot our Earth and, beyond the mundane coasts, drifted on dreams of their own into aureate regions of twilight, to wander in lands wherein lovers walk briefly and only once.

THE TWELFTH CHRONICLE

THE BUILDING OF CASTLE RODRIGUEZ AND THE ENDING OF THESE CHRONICLES

When the King of Shadow Valley met Rodriguez, for the first time in the forest, and gave him his promise and left him by his camp-fire, he went back some way towards the bowmen's cottage and blew his horn; and his hundred bowmen were about him almost at once. To these he gave their orders and they went back, whence they had come, into the forest's darkness. But he went to the bowmen's cottage and paced before it, a dark and lonely figure of the night; and wherever he paced the ground he marked it with small sticks. And next morning the hundred bowmen came with axes as soon as the earliest light had entered the forest, and each of them chose out one of the giant trees that stood before the cottage, and attacked it. All day they swung their axes against the forest's elders, of which nearly a hundred were fallen when evening came. And the stoutest of these, great trunks that were four feet through, were dragged by horses to the bowmen's cottage and laid by the little sticks that the King of Shadow Valley had put overnight in the ground. The bowmen's cottage and the kitchen that was in the wood behind it, and a few trees that still stood, were now all enclosed by four lines of fallen trees which made a large rectangle on the ground with a small square at each of its corners. And craftsmen came, and smoothed and hollowed the inner sides of the four rows of trees, working far into the night. So was the first day's work accomplished and so was built the first layer of the walls of Castle Rodriguez.

On the next day the bowmen again felled a hundred trees; the top of the first layer was cut flat by carpenters; at evening the second layer was hoisted up after their under sides had been flattened to fit the layer below them; quantities more were cast in to make the floor when they had been gradually smoothed and fitted: at the end of the second day a man could not see over the walls of Castle Rodriguez. And on the third day more craftsmen arrived, men from distant villages at the forest's edge, whence the King of Shadow Valley had summoned them; and they carved the walls as they grew. And a hundred trees fell that day, and the castle was another layer higher. And all the while a park was growing in the forest, as they

felled the great trees; but the greatest trees of all the bowmen spared, oaks that had stood there for ages and ages of men; they left them to grip the earth for a while longer, for a few more human generations.

On the fourth day the two windows at the back of the bowmen's cottage began to darken, and that evening Castle Rodriguez was fifteen feet high. And still the hundred bowmen hewed at the forest, bringing sunlight bright on to grass that was shadowed by oaks for ages. And at the end of the fifth day they began to roof the lower rooms and make their second floor: and still the castle grew a layer a day, though the second storey they built with thinner trees that were only three feet through, which were more easily carried to their place by the pulleys. And now they began to heap up rocks in a mass of mortar against the wall on the outside, till a steep slope guarded the whole of the lower part of the castle against fire from any attacker if war should come that way, in any of the centuries that were yet to be: and the deep windows they guarded with bars of iron.

The shape of the castle showed itself clearly now, rising on each side of the bowmen's cottage and behind it, with a tower at each of its corners. To the left of the old cottage the main doorway opened to the great hall, in which a pile of a few huge oaks was being transformed into a massive stair. Three figures of strange men held up this ceiling with their heads and uplifted hands, when the castle was finished; but as yet the carvers had only begun their work, so that only here and there an eye peeped out, or a smile flickered, to give any expression to the curious faces of these fabulous creatures of the wood, which were slowly taking their shape out of three trees whose roots were still in the earth below the floor. In an upper storey one of these trees became a tall cupboard; and the shelves and the sides and the back and the top of it were all one piece of oak.

All the interior of the castle was of wood, hollowed into alcoves and polished, or carved into figures leaning out from the walls. So vast were the timbers that the walls, at a glance, seemed almost one piece of wood. And the centuries that were coming to Spain darkened the walls as they came, through autumnal shades until they were all black, as though they all mourned in secret for lost generations; but they have not yet crumbled.

The fireplaces they made with great square red tiles, which they also put in the chimneys amongst rude masses of mortar: and these great dark holes remained always mysterious to those that looked for mystery in the family that whiled away the ages in that castle. And by every fireplace two queer

carved creatures stood upholding the mantlepiece, with mystery in their faces and curious limbs, uniting the hearth with fable and with tales told in the wood. Years after the men that carved them were all dust the shadows of these creatures would come out and dance in the room, on wintry nights when all the lamps were gone and flames stole out and flickered above the smouldering logs.

In the second storey one great saloon ran all the length of the castle. In it was a long table with eight legs that had carvings of roses rambling along its edges: the table and its legs were all of one piece with the floor. They would never have hollowed the great trunk in time had they not used fire. The second storey was barely complete on the day that Rodriguez and Don Alderon and Morano came to the chains that guarded the park. And the King of Shadow Valley would not permit his gift to be seen in anything less than its full magnificence, and had commanded that no man in the world might enter to see the work of his bowmen and craftsmen until it should frown at all comers a castle formidable as any in Spain.

And then they heaped up the mortar and rock to the top of the second storey, but above that they let the timbers show, except where they filled in plaster between the curving trunks: and the ages blackened the timber in amongst the white plaster; but not a storm that blew in all the years that came, nor the moss of so many Springs, ever rotted away those beams that the forest had given and on which the bowmen had laboured so long ago. But the castle weathered the ages and reached our days, worn, battered even, by its journey through the long and sometimes troubled years, but splendid with the traffic that it had with history in many gorgeous periods. Here Valdar the Excellent came once in his youth. And Charles the Magnificent stayed a night in this castle when on a pilgrimage to a holy place of the South.

It was here that Peter the Arrogant in his cups gave Africa, one Spring night, to his sister's son. What grandeurs this castle has seen! What chronicles could be writ of it! But not these chronicles, for they draw near their close, and they have yet to tell how the castle was built. Others shall tell what banners flew from all four of its towers, adding a splendour to the wind, and for what cause they flew. I have yet to tell of their building.

The second storey was roofed, and Castle Rodriguez still rose one layer day by day, with a hauling at pulleys and the work of a hundred men: and all the while the park swept farther into the forest.

And the trees that grew up through the building were worked by the craftsmen in every chamber into which they grew: and a great branch of the hugest of them made a little crooked stair in an upper storey. On the floors they laid down skins of beasts that the bowmen slew in the forest; and on the walls there hung all manner of leather, tooled and dyed as they had the art to do in that far-away period in Spain.

When the third storey was finished they roofed the castle over, laying upon the huge rafters red tiles that they made of clay. But the towers were not yet finished.

At this time the King of Shadow Valley sent a runner into Lowlight to shoot a blunt arrow with a message tied to it into Don Alderon's garden, near to the door, at evening.

And they went on building the towers above the height of the roof And near the top of them they made homes for archers, little turrets that leaned like swallows' nests out from each tower, high places where they could see and shoot and not be seen from below. And little narrow passages wound away behind perched battlements of stone, by which archers could slip from place to place, and shoot from here or from there and never be known. So were built in that distant age the towers of Castle Rodriguez.

And one day four weeks from the felling of the first oak, the period of his promise being accomplished, the King of Shadow Valley blew his horn. And standing by what had been the bowmen's cottage, now all shut in by sheer walls of Castle Rodriguez, he gathered his bowmen to him. And when they were all about him he gave them their orders. They were to go by stealth to the village of Lowlight, and were to be by daylight before the house of Don Alderon; and, whether wed or unwed, whether she fled or folk defended the house, to bring Dona Serafina of the Valley of Dawnlight to be the chatelaine of Castle Rodriguez.

For this purpose he bade them take with them a chariot that he thought magnificent, though the mighty timbers that gave grandeur to Castle Rodriguez had a cumbrous look in the heavy vehicle that was to the bowmen's eyes the triumphal car of the forest. So they took their bows and obeyed, leaving the craftsmen at their work in the castle, which was now quite roofed over, towers and all. They went through the forest by little paths that they knew, going swiftly and warily in the bowmen's way: and just before nightfall they were at the forest's edge, though they went no farther from it than its shadows go in the evening. And there they rested

under the oak trees for the early part of the night except those whose art it was to gather news for their king; and three of those went into Lowlight and mixed with the villagers there.

When white mists moved over the fields near dawn and wavered ghostly about Lowlight, the green bowman moved with them. And just out of hearing of the village, behind wild shrubs that hid them, the bowmen that were coming from the forest met the three that had spent the night in taverns of Lowlight. And the three told the hundred of the great wedding that there was to be in the Church of the Renunciation that morning in Lowlight: and of the preparations that were made, and how holy men had come from far on mules, and had slept the night in the village, and the Bishop of Toledo himself would bless the bridegroom's sword. The bowmen therefore retired a little way and, moving through the mists, came forward to points whence they could watch the church, well concealed on the wild plain, which here and there gave up a field to man but was mostly the playground of wild creatures whose ways were the bowmen's ways. And here they waited.

This was the wedding of Rodriguez and Serafina, of which gossips often spoke at their doors in summer evenings, old women mumbling of fair weddings that each had seen; and they had been children when they saw this wedding; they were those that threw small handfuls of anemones on the path before the porch. They told the tale of it till they could tell no more. It is the account of the last two or three of them, old, old women, that came at last to these chronicles, so that their tongues may wag as it were a little longer through these pages although they have been for so many centuries dead. And this is all that books are able to do.

First there was bell-ringing and many voices, and then the voices hushed, and there came the procession of eight divines of Murcia, whose vestments were strange to Lowlight. Then there came a priest from the South, near the border of Andalusia, who overnight had sanctified the ring. (It was he who had entertained Rodriguez when he first escaped from la Garda, and Rodriguez had sent for him now.) Each note of the bells came clear through the hush as they entered the church. And then with suitable attendants the bishop strode by and they saw quite close the blessed cope of Toledo. And the bridegroom followed him in, wearing his sword, and Don Alderon went with him. And then the voices rose again in the street: the bells rang on: they all saw Dona Mirana. The little bunches of bright anemones grew

sticky in their hands: the bells seemed louder: cheering rose in the street and came all down it nearer. Then Dona Serafina walked past them with all her maids: and that is what the gossips chiefly remembered, telling how she smiled at them, and praising her dress, through those distant summer evenings. Then there was music in the church. And afterwards the forest-people had come. And the people screamed, for none knew what they would do. But they bowed so low to the bride and bridegroom, and showed their great hunting bows so willingly to all who wished to see, that the people lost their alarm and only feared lest the Bishop of Toledo should blast the merry bowmen with one of his curses.

And presently the bride and bridegroom entered the chariot, and the people cheered; and there were farewells and the casting of flowers; and the bishop blessed three of their bows; and a fat man sat beside the driver with folded arms, wearing bright on his face a look of foolish contentment; and the bowmen and bride and bridegroom all went away to the forest.

Four huge white horses drew that bridal chariot, the bowmen ran beside it, and soon it was lost to sight of the girls that watched it from Lowlight; but their memories held it close till their eyes could no longer see to knit and they could only sit by their porches in fine weather and talk of the days that were.

So came Rodriguez and his bride to the forest; he silent, perplexed, wondering always to what home and what future he brought her; she knowing less than he and trusting more. And on the untended road that the bowmen shared with stags and with rare, very venturous travellers, the wheels of the woodland chariot sank so deep in the sandy earth that the escort of bowmen needed seldom to run any more; and he who sat by the driver climbed down and walked silent for once, perhaps awed by the occasion, though he was none other than Morano. Serafina was delighted with the forest, but between Rodriguez and its beautiful grandeur his anxieties crowded thickly. He leaned over once from the chariot and asked one of the bowmen again about that castle; but the bowman only bowed and answered with a proverb of Spain, not easily carried so far from its own soil to thrive in our language, but signifying that the morrow showeth all things. He was silent then, for he knew that there was no way to a direct answer through those proverbs, and after a while perhaps there came to him some of Serafina’s trustfulness. By evening they came to a wide avenue leading to great gates.

Rodriguez did not know the avenue, he knew no paths so wide in Shadow Valley; but he knew those gates. They were the gates of iron that led nowhere. But now an avenue went from them upon the other side, and opened widely into a park dotted with clumps of trees. And the two great iron shields, they too had changed with the changes that had bewitched the forest, for their surfaces that had glowed so unmistakably blank, side by side in the firelight, not many nights before, blazoned now the armorial bearings of Rodriguez upon the one and those of the house of Dawnlight upon the other. Through the opened gates they entered the young park that seemed to wonder at its own ancient trees, where wild deer drifted away from them like shadows through the evening: for the bowmen had driven in deer for miles through the forest. They passed a pool where water-lilies lay in languid beauty for hundreds of summers, but as yet no flower peeped into the water, for the pond was all hallowed newly.

A clump of trees stood right ahead of their way; they passed round it; and Castle Rodriguez came all at once into view. Serafina gasped joyously. Rodriguez saw its towers, its turrets for archers, its guarded windows deep in the mass of stone, its solemn row of battlements, but he did not believe what he saw. He did not believe that here at last was his castle, that here was his dream fulfilled and his journey done. He expected to wake suddenly in the cold in some lonely camp, he expected the Ebro to unfold its coils in the North and to come and sweep it away. It was but another strayed hope, he thought, taking the form of dream. But Castle Rodriguez still stood frowning there, and none of its towers vanished, or changed as things change in dreams; but the servants of the King of Shadow Valley opened the great door, and Serafina and Rodriguez entered, and all the hundred bowmen disappeared.

Here we will leave them, and let these Chronicles end. For whoever would tell more of Castle Rodriguez must wield one of those ponderous pens that hangs on the study wall in the house of historians. Great days in the story of Spain shone on those iron-barred windows, and things were said in its banqueting chamber and planned in its inner rooms that sometimes turned that story this way or that, as rocks turn a young river. And as a traveller meets a mighty river at one of its bends, and passes on his path, while the river sweeps on to its estuary and the sea, so I leave the triumphs and troubles of that story which I touched for one moment by the door of Castle Rodriguez.

My concern is but with Rodriguez and Serafina and to tell that they lived here in happiness; and to tell that the humble Morano found his happiness too. For he became the magnificent steward of Castle Rodriguez, the majordomo, and upon august occasions he wore as much red plush as he had ever seen in his dreams, when he saw this very event, sleeping by dying camp-fires. And he slept not upon straw but upon good heaps of wolf-skins. But pining a little in the second year of his somewhat lonely splendour, he married one of the maidens of the forest, the child of a bowman that hunted boars with their king. And all the green bowmen came and built him a house by the gates of the park, whence he walked solemnly on proper occasions to wait upon his master. Morano, good, faithful man, come forward for but a moment out of the Golden Age and bow across all those centuries to the reader: say one farewell to him in your Spanish tongue, though the sound of it be no louder than the sound of shadows moving, and so back to the dim splendour of the past, for the Señor or Señora shall hear your name no more.

For years Rodriguez lived a chieftain of the forest, owning the overlordship of the King of Shadow Valley, whom he and Serafina would entertain with all the magnificence of which their castle was capable on such occasions as he appeared before the iron gates. They seldom saw him. Sometimes they heard his horn as he went by. They heard his bowmen follow. And all would pass and perhaps they would see none. But upon occasions he came. He came to the christening of the eldest son of Rodriguez and Serafina, for whom he was godfather. He came again to see the boy shoot for the first time with a bow. And later he came to give little presents, small treasures of the forest, to Rodriguez' daughters; who treated him always, not as sole lord of that forest that travellers dreaded, but as a friend of their very own that they had found for themselves. He had his favourites among them and none quite knew which they were.

And one day he came in his old age to give Rodriguez a message. And he spoke long and tenderly of the forest as though all its glades were sacred.

And soon after that day he died, and was buried with the mourning of all his men in the deeps of Shadow Valley, where only Rodriguez and the bowmen knew. And Rodriguez became, as the old king had commanded, the ruler of Shadow Valley and all its faithful men. With them he hunted and defended the forest, holding all its ways to be sacred, as the old king had taught. It is told how Rodriguez ruled the forest well.

And later he made a treaty with the Spanish King acknowledging him sole Lord of Spain, including Shadow Valley, saving that certain right should pertain to the foresters and should be theirs for ever. And these rights are written on parchment and sealed with the seal of Spain; and none may harm the forest without the bowmen's leave.

Rodriguez was made Duke of Shadow Valley and a Magnifico of the first degree; though little he went with other hidalgos to Court, but lived with his family in Shadow Valley, travelling seldom beyond the splendour of the forest farther than Lowlight.

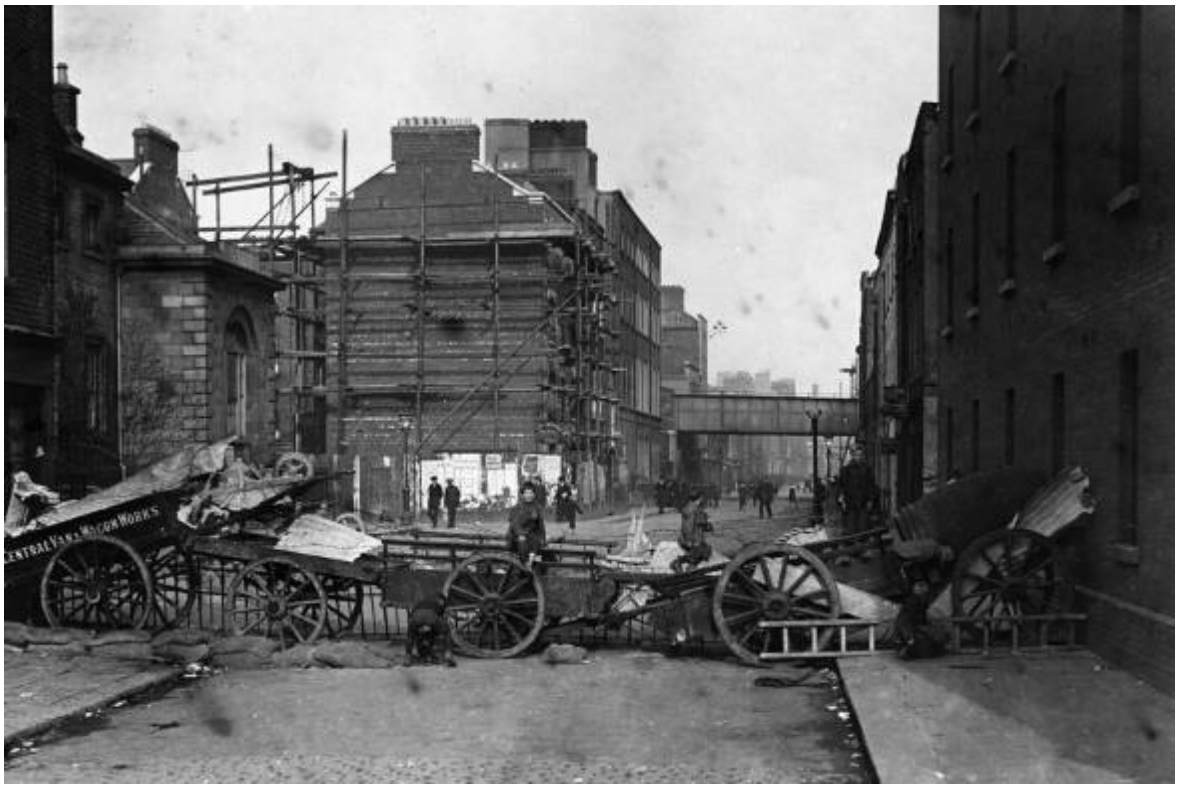
Thus he saw the glory of autumn turning the woods to fairyland: and when the stags were roaring and winter coming on he would take a boar-spear down from the wall and go hunting through the forest, whose twigs were black and slender and still against the bright menace of winter. Spring found him viewing the fields that his men had sown, along the forest's edge, and finding in the chaunt of the myriad birds a stirring of memories, a beckoning towards past days. In summer he would see his boys and girls at play, running through shafts of sunlight that made leaves and grass like pale emeralds. He gave his days to the forest and the four seasons. Thus he dwelt amidst splendours such as History has never seen in any visit of hers to the courts of men.

Of him and Serafina it has been written and sung that they lived happily ever after; and though they are now so many centuries dead, may they have in the memories of such of my readers as will let them linger there, that afterglow of life that remembrance gives, which is all that there is on earth for those that walked it once and that walk the paths of their old haunts no more.

Other Short Story Collections



Dunsany photographed during the First World War. Dunsany served as Captain in the Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers. Although he spent time at the Front during the last two years of the war, he spent much of the conflict in Ireland.

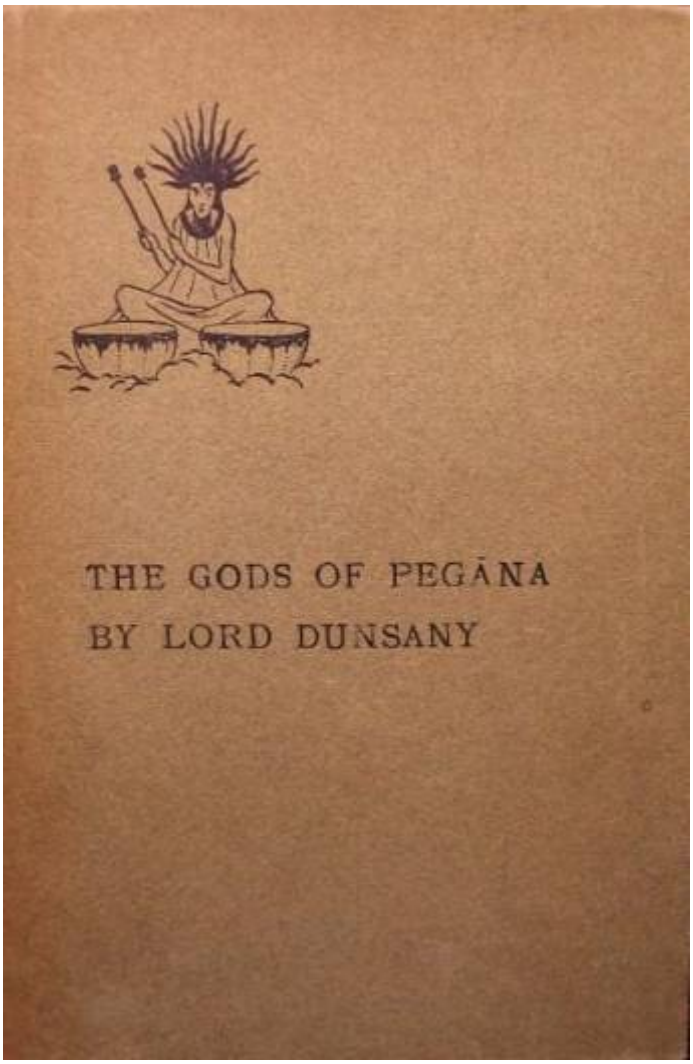


A street barricade erected by the rebels in Dublin during the Rising — Dunsany was wounded in the Easter Rising of 1916.

THE GODS OF PEGANA



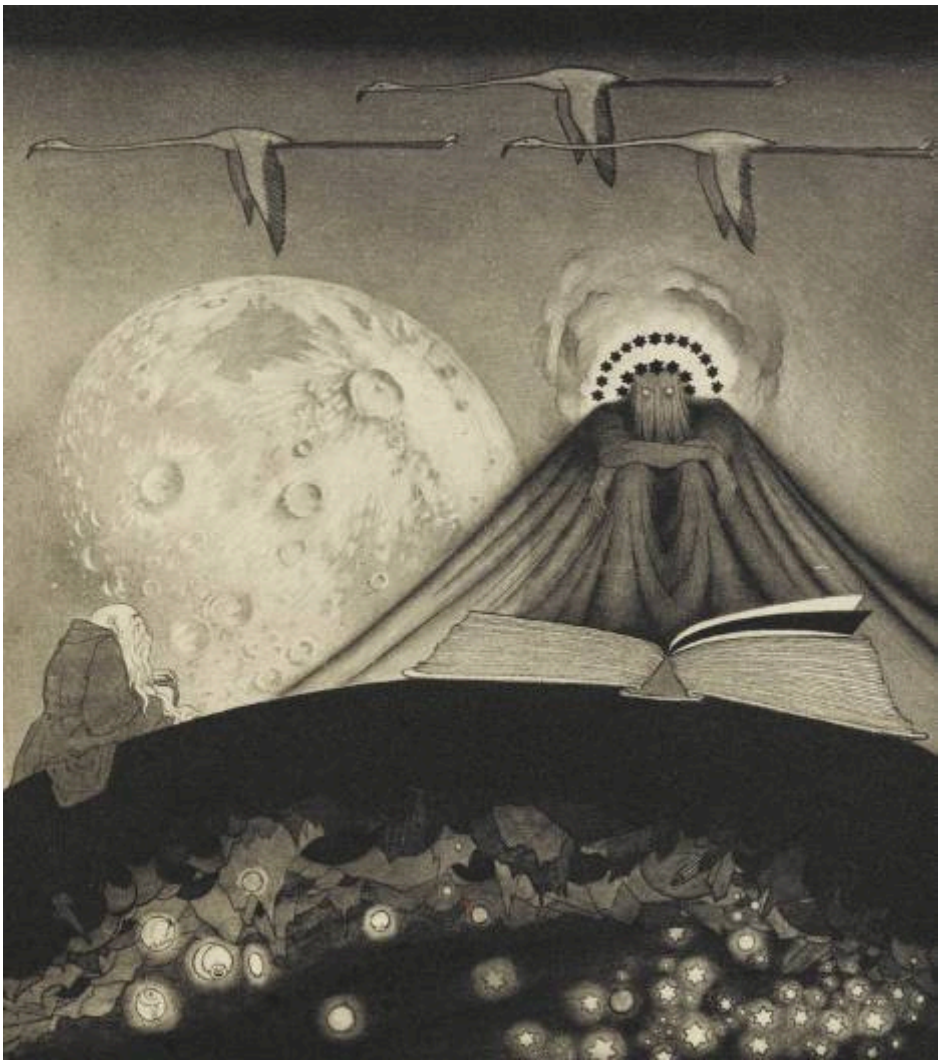
This collection of fantasy stories was published in 1905 on a commission basis. The book is formed as a series of short stories linked by Dunsany's invented pantheon of deities that dwell in Pegāna. It was followed by a further collection *Time and the Gods* and by some stories in *The Sword of Welleran and Other Stories* and in *Tales of Three Hemispheres*. The book has been reprinted several times, including in editions that gather together all the stories relating to the pantheon. In 1919 Dunsany told an American interviewer "In *The Gods of Pegana* I tried to account for the ocean and the moon. I don't know whether anyone else has ever tried that before."



Cover of the first edition

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One of Sidney Sime's evocative illustrations for the first edition

PREFACE

In the mists before THE BEGINNING, Fate and Chance cast lots to decide whose the Game should be; and he that won strode through the mists to MANA-YOOD-SUSHAI and said: “Now make gods for Me, for I have won the cast and the Game is to be Mine.” Who it was that won the cast, and whether it was Fate or whether Chance that went through the mists before THE BEGINNING to MANA-YOOD-SUSHAI — *none knoweth.*

INTRODUCTION

Before there stood gods upon Olympus, or ever Allah was Allah, had wrought and rested MANA-YOOD-SUSHAI.

There are in Pegana Mung and Sish and Kib, and the maker of all small gods, who is MANA-YOOD-SUSHAI. Moreover, we have a faith in Roon and Slid.

And it has been said of old that all things that have been were wrought by the small gods, excepting only MANA-YOOD-SUSHAI, who made the gods and hath thereafter rested.

And none may pray to MANA-YOOD-SUSHAI but only the gods whom he hath made.

But at the Last will MANA-YOOD-SUSHAI forget to rest, and will make again new gods and other worlds, and will destroy the gods whom he hath made.

And the gods and the worlds shall depart, and there shall be only MANA-YOOD-SUSHAI.

OF SKARL THE DRUMMER

When MANA-YOOD-SUSHAI had made the gods and Skarl, Skarl made a drum, and began to beat upon it that he might drum for ever. Then because he was weary after the making of the gods, and because of the drumming of Skarl, did MANA-YOOD-SUSHAI grow drowsy and fall asleep.

And there fell a hush upon the gods when they saw that MANA rested, and there was silence on Pegana save for the drumming of Skarl. Skarl sitteth upon the mist before the feet of MANA-YOOD-SUSHAI, above the gods of Pegana, and there he beateth his drum. Some say that the Worlds and the Suns are but the echoes of the drumming of Skarl, and others say that they be dreams that arise in the mind of MANA because of the drumming of Skarl, as one may dream whose rest is troubled by sound of song, but none knoweth, for who hath heard the voice of MANA-YOOD-SUSHAI, or who hath seen his drummer?

Whether the season be winter or whether it be summer, whether it be morning among the worlds or whether it be night, Skarl still beateth his drum, for the purposes of the gods are not yet fulfilled. Sometimes the arm of Skarl grows weary; but still he beateth his drum, that the gods may do the work of the gods, and the worlds go on, for if he cease for an instant then MANA-YOOD-SUSHAI will start awake, and there will be worlds nor gods no more.

But, when at the last the arm of Skarl shall cease to beat his drum, silence shall startle Pegana like thunder in a cave, and MANA-YOOD-SUSHAI shall cease to rest.

Then shall Skarl put his drum upon his back and walk forth into the void beyond the worlds, because it is THE END, and the work of Skarl is over.

There may arise some other god whom Skarl may serve, or it may be that he shall perish; but to Skarl it shall matter not, for he shall have done the work of Skarl.

OF THE MAKING OF THE WORLDS

When MANA-YOOD-SUSHAI had made the gods there were only the gods, and They sat in the middle of Time, for there was as much Time before them as behind them, which having no end had neither a beginning.

And Pegana was without heat or light or sound, save for the drumming of Skarl; moreover Pegana was The Middle of All, for there was below Pegana what there was above it, and there lay before it that which lay beyond.

Then said the gods, making the signs of the gods and speaking with Their hands lest the silence of Pegana should blush; then said the gods to one another, speaking with Their hands; "Let Us make worlds to amuse Ourselves while MANA rests. Let Us make worlds and Life and Death, and colours in the sky; only let Us not break the silence upon Pegana."

Then raising Their hands, each god according to his sign, They made the worlds and the suns, and put a light in the houses of the sky.

Then said the gods: "Let Us make one to seek, to seek and never to find out concerning the wherefore of the making of the gods."

And They made by the lifting of Their hands, each god according to his sign, the Bright One with the flaring tail to seek from the end of the Worlds to the end of them again, to return again after a hundred years.

Man, when thou seest the comet, know that another seeketh besides thee nor ever findeth out.

Then said the gods, still speaking with Their hands: "Let there be now a Watcher to regard."

And They made the Moon, with his face wrinkled with many mountains and worn with a thousand valleys, to regard with pale eyes the games of the small gods, and to watch throughout the resting time of MANA-YOOD-SUSHAI; to watch, to regard all things, and be silent.

Then said the gods: "Let Us make one to rest. One not to move among the moving. One not to seek like the comet, nor to go round like the worlds; to rest while MANA rests."

And They made the Star of the Abiding and set it in the North.

Man, when thou seest the Star of the Abiding to the North, know that one resteth as doth MANA-YOOD-SUSHAI, and know that somewhere among the Worlds is rest.

Lastly the gods said: “We have made worlds and suns, and one to seek and another to regard, let Us now make one to wonder.”

And They made Earth to wonder, each god by the uplifting of his hand according to his sign.

And Earth was.

OF THE GAME OF THE GODS

A million years passed over the first game of the gods. And MANA-YOOD-SUSHAI still rested, still in the middle of Time, and the gods still played with Worlds. The Moon regarded, and the Bright One sought, and returned again to his seeking.

Then Kib grew weary of the first game of the gods, and raised his hand in Pegana, making the sign of Kib, and Earth became covered with beasts for Kib to play with.

And Kib played with beasts.

But the other gods said one to another, speaking with their hands: "What is it that Kib has done?"

And They said to Kib: "What are these things that move upon The Earth yet move not in circles like the Worlds, that regard like the Moon and yet they do not shine?"

And Kib said: "This is Life."

But the gods said one to another: "If Kib has thus made beasts he will in time make Men, and will endanger the Secret of the gods."

And Mung was jealous of the work of Kib, and sent down Death among the beasts, but could not stamp them out.

A million years passed over the second game of the gods, and still it was the Middle of Time.

And Kib grew weary of the second game, and raised his hand in the Middle of All, making the sign of Kib, and made Men: out of beasts he made them, and Earth was covered with Men.

Then the gods feared greatly for the Secret of the gods, and set a veil between Man and his ignorance that he might not understand. And Mung was busy among Men.

But when the other gods saw Kib playing his new game They came and played it too. And this They will play until MANA arises to rebuke Them, saying: "What do ye playing with Worlds and Suns and Men and Life and Death?" And They shall be ashamed of Their playing in the hour of the laughter of MANA-YOOD-SUSHAI.

It was Kib who first broke the Silence of Pegana, by speaking with his mouth like a man.

And all the other gods were angry with Kib that he had spoken with his mouth.

And there was no longer silence in Pegana or the Worlds.

THE CHAUNT OF THE GODS

There came the voice of the gods singing the chaunt of the gods, singing: “We are the gods; We are the little games of MANA-YOOD-SUSHAI that he hath played and hath forgotten.

“MANA-YOOD-SUSHAI hath made us, and We made the Worlds and the Suns.

“And We play with the Worlds and the Sun and Life and Death until MANA arises to rebuke us, saying: ‘What do ye playing with Worlds and Suns?’

“It is a very serious thing that there be Worlds and Suns, and yet most withering is the laughter of MANA-YOOD-SUSHAI.

“And when he arises from resting at the Last, and laughs at us for playing with Worlds and Suns, We will hastily put them behind us, and there shall be Worlds no more.”

THE SAYINGS OF KIB

(Sender of Life in all the Worlds)
Kib said: “I am Kib. I am none other than Kib.”

Kib is Kib. Kib is he and no other. Believe! Kib said: “When
Time was early, when Time was very early indeed — there was only
MANA-YOOD-SUSHAI. MANA-YOOD-SUSHAI was before the
beginning of the
gods, and shall be after their going.”

And Kib said: “After the going of the gods there will be no small worlds nor big.”

Kib said: “It will be lonely for MANA-YOOD-SUSHAI.”

Because this is written, believe! For is it not written, or are you greater than Kib? Kib is Kib.

CONCERNING SISH

(The Destroyer of Hours)

Time is the hound of Sish.

At Sish's bidding do the hours run before him as he goeth upon his way.

Never hath Sish stepped backward nor ever hath he tarried; never hath he relented to the things that once he knew nor turned to them again.

Before Sish is Kib, and behind him goeth Mung.

Very pleasant are all things before the face of Sish, but behind him they are withered and old.

And Sish goeth ceaselessly upon his way.

Once the gods walked upon Earth as men walk and spake with their mouths like Men. That was in Wornath-Mavai. They walk not now.

And Wornath-Mavai was a garden fairer than all the gardens upon Earth.

Kib was propitious, and Mung raised not his hand against it, neither did Sish assail it with his hours.

Wornath-Mavai lieth in a valley and looketh towards the south, and on the slopes of it Sish rested among the flowers when Sish was young.

Thence Sish went forth into the world to destroy its cities, and to provoke his hours to assail all things, and to batter against them with the rust and with the dust.

And Time, which is the hound of Sish, devoured all things; and Sish sent up the ivy and fostered weeds, and dust fell from the hand of Sish and covered stately things. Only the valley where Sish rested when he and Time were young did Sish not provoke his hours to assail.

There he restrained his old hound Time, and at its borders Mung withheld his footsteps.

Wornath-Mavai still lieth looking towards the south, a garden among gardens, and still the flowers grow about its slopes as they grew when the gods were young; and even the butterflies live in Wornath-Mavai still. For the minds of the gods relent towards their earliest memories, who relent not otherwise at all.

Wornath-Mavai still lieth looking towards the south; but if thou shouldst ever find it thou art then more fortunate than the gods, because they walk not in Wornath-Mavai now.

Once did the prophet think that he discerned it in the distance beyond mountains, a garden exceeding fair with flowers; but Sish arose, and pointed with his hand, and set his hound to pursue him, who hath followed ever since.

Time is the hound of the gods; but it hath been said of old that he will one day turn upon his masters, and seek to slay the gods, excepting only MANA-YOOD-SUSHAI, whose dreams are the gods themselves — dreamed long ago.

THE SAYINGS OF SLID

(Whose Soul is by the Sea)

Slid said: “Let no man pray to MANA-YOOD-SUSHAI, for who shall trouble MANA with mortal woes or irk him with the sorrows of all the houses of Earth?

“Nor let any sacrifice to MANA-YOOD-SUSHAI, for what glory shall he find in sacrifices or altars who hath made the gods themselves?

“Pray to the small gods, who are the gods of Doing; but MANA is the god of Having Done — the god of Having Done and of the Resting.

“Pray to the small gods and hope that they may hear thee. Yet what mercy should the small gods have, who themselves made Death and Pain; or shall they restrain their old hound Time for thee?

“Slid is but a small god. Yet Slid is Slid — it is written and hath been said.

“Pray, thou, therefore, to Slid, and forget not Slid, and it may be that Slid will not forget to send thee Death when most thou needest it.”

And the People of Earth said: “There is a melody upon the Earth as though ten thousand streams all sang together for their homes that they had forsaken in the hills.”

And Slid said: “I am the Lord of gliding waters and of foaming waters and of still. I am the Lord of all the waters in the world and all that long streams garner in the hills; but the soul of Slid is in the Sea. Thither goes all that glides upon Earth, and the end of all the rivers is the Sea.”

And Slid said: “The hand of Slid hath toyed with cataracts, and down the valleys have trod the feet of Slid, and out of the lakes of the plains regard the eyes of Slid; but the soul of Slid is in the sea.”

Much homage hath Slid among the cities of men and pleasant are the woodland paths and the paths of the plains, and pleasant the high valleys where he danceth in the hills; but Slid would be fettered neither by banks nor boundaries — so the soul of Slid is in the Sea.

For there may Slid repose beneath the sun and smile at the gods above him with all the smiles of Slid, and be a happier god than Those who sway the Worlds, whose work is Life and Death.

There may he sit and smile, or creep among the ships, or moan and sigh round islands in his great content — the miser lord of wealth in gems and

pearls beyond the telling of all fables.

Or there may he, when Slid would fain exult, throw up his great arms, or toss with many a fathom of wandering hair the mighty head of Slid, and cry aloud tumultuous dirges of shipwreck, and feel through all his being the crashing might of Slid, and sway the sea. Then doth the Sea, like venturous legions on the eve of war that exult to acclaim their chief, gather its force together from under all the winds and roar and follow and sing and crash together to vanquish all things — and all at the bidding of Slid, whose soul is in the sea.

There is ease in the soul of Slid and there be calms upon the sea; also, there be storms upon the sea and troubles in the soul of Slid, for the gods have many moods. And Slid is in many places, for he sitteth in high Pegana. Also along the valleys walketh Slid, wherever water moveth or lieth still; but the voice and the cry of Slid are from the sea. And to whoever that cry hath ever come he must needs follow and follow, leaving all stable things; only to be always with Slid in all the moods of Slid, to find no rest until he reaches the sea.

With the cry of Slid before them and the hills of their home behind have gone a hundred thousand to the sea, over whose bones doth Slid lament with the voice of a god lamenting for his people. Even the streams from the inner lands have heard Slid's far-off cry, and all together have forsaken lawns and trees to follow where Slid is gathering up his own, to rejoice where Slid rejoices, singing the chaunt of Slid, even as will at the Last gather all the Lives of the People about the feet of MANA-YOOD-SUSHAI.

THE DEEDS OF MUNG

(Lord of all Deaths between Pegana and the Rim)

Once, as Mung went his way athwart the Earth and up and down its cities and across its plains, Mung came upon a man who was afraid when Mung said: "I am Mung!"

And Mung said: "Were the forty million years before thy coming intolerable to thee?"

And Mung said: "Not less tolerable to thee shall be the forty million years to come!"

Then Mung made against him the sign of Mung and the Life of the Man was fettered no longer with hands and feet.

At the end of the flight of the arrow there is Mung, and in the houses and the cities of Men. Mung walketh in all places at all times. But mostly he loves to walk in the dark and still, along the river mists when the wind hath sank, a little before night meeteth with the morning upon the highway between Pegana and the Worlds.

Sometimes Mung entereth the poor man's cottage; Mung also boweth very low before The King. Then do the Lives of the poor man and of The King go forth among the Worlds.

And Mung said: "Many turnings hath the road that Kib hath given every man to tread upon the earth. Behind one of these turnings sitteth Mung."

One day as a man trod upon the road that Kib had given him to tread he came suddenly upon Mung. And when Mung said: "I am Mung!" the man cried out: "Alas, that I took this road, for had I gone by any other way then had I not met with Mung."

And Mung said: "Had it been possible for thee to go by any other way then had the Scheme of Things been otherwise and the gods had been other gods. When MANA-YOOD-SUSHAI forgets to rest and makes again new gods it may be that They will send thee again into the Worlds; and then thou mayest choose some other way, and not meet with Mung."

Then Mung made the sign of Mung. And the Life of that man went forth with yesterday's regrets and all old sorrows and forgotten things — whither Mung knoweth.

And Mung went onward with his work to sunder Life from flesh, and Mung came upon a man who became stricken with sorrow when he saw the shadow of Mung. But Mung said: “When at the sign of Mung thy Life shall float away there will also disappear thy sorrow at forsaking it.” But the man cried out: “O Mung! tarry for a little, and make not the sign of Mung against me now, for I have a family upon the earth with whom sorrow will remain, though mine should disappear because of the sign of Mung.”

And Mung said: “With the gods it is always Now. And before Sish hath banished many of the years the sorrows of thy family for thee shall go the way of thine.” And the man beheld Mung making the sign of Mung before his eyes, which beheld things no more.

THE CHAUNT OF THE PRIESTS

This is the chaunt of the Priests.

The chaunt of the priests of Mung.

This is the chaunt of the Priests.

All day long to Mung cry out the Priests of Mung, and, yet Mung harkeneth not. What, then, shall avail the prayers of All the People?

Rather bring gifts to the Priests, gifts to the Priests of Mung.

So shall they cry louder unto Mung than ever was their wont.

And it may be that Mung shall hear.

Not any longer than shall fall the Shadow of Mung athwart the hopes of the People.

Not any longer then shall the Tread of Mung darken the dreams of the people.

Not any longer shall the lives of the People be loosened because of Mung.

Bring ye gifts to the Priests, gifts to the Priests of Mung.

This is the chaunt of the Priests.

The chaunt of the Priests of Mung.

This is the chaunt of the Priests.

THE SAYINGS OF LIMPANG-TUNG

(The God of Mirth and of Melodious Minstrels)

And Limpang-Tung said: “The ways of the gods are strange. The flower groweth up and the flower fadeth away. This may be very clever of the gods. Man groweth from his infancy, and in a while he dieth. This may be very clever too.

“But the gods play with a strange scheme.

“I will send jests into the world and a little mirth. And while Death seems to thee as far away as the purple rim of hills; or sorrow as far off as rain in the blue days of summer, then pray to Limpang-Tung. But when thou growest old, or ere thou diest, pray not of Limpang-Tung, for thou becomest part of a scheme that he doth not understand.

“Go out into the starry night, and Limpang-Tung will dance with thee who danced since the gods were young, the god of mirth and of melodious minstrels. Or offer up a jest to Limpang-Tung; only pray not in thy sorrow to Limpang-Tung, for he saith of sorrow: ‘It may be very clever of the gods,’ but he doth not understand.”

And Limpang-Tung said: “I am lesser than the gods; pray, therefore, to the small gods and not to Limpang-Tung.

“Natheless between Pegana and the Earth flutter ten thousand thousand prayers that beat their wings against the face of Death, and never for one of them hath the hand of the Striker been stayed, nor yet have tarried the feet of the Relentless One.

“Utter thy prayer! It may accomplish where failed ten thousand thousand.

“Limpang-Tung is lesser than the gods, and doth not understand.”

And Limpang-Tung said: “Lest men grow weary down on the great Worlds through gazing always at a changeless sky, I will paint my pictures in the sky. And I will paint them twice in every day for so long as days shall be. Once as the day ariseth out of the homes of dawn will I paint the Blue, that men may see and rejoice; and ere day falleth under into the night will I paint upon the Blue again, lest men be sad.

“It is a little,” said Limpang-Tung, “it is a little even for a god to give some pleasure to men upon the Worlds.”

And Limpang-Tung hath sworn that the pictures that he paints shall never be the same for so long as the days shall be, and this he hath sworn by the oath of the gods of Pegana that the gods may never break, laying his hand upon the shoulder of each of the gods and swearing by the light behind Their eyes.

Limpang-Tung hath lured a melody out of the stream and stolen its anthem from the forest; for him the wind hath cried in lonely places and the ocean sung its dirges. There is music for Limpang-Tung in the sounds of the moving of grass and in the voices of the people that lament or in the cry of them that rejoice.

In an inner mountain land where none hath come he hath carved his organ pipes out of the mountains, and there when the winds, his servants, come in from all the world he maketh the melody of Limpang-Tung. But the song, arising at night, goeth forth like a river, winding through all the world, and here and there amid the peoples of earth one heareth, and straightaway all that hath voice to sing crieth aloud in music to his soul.

Or sometimes walking through the dusk with steps unheard by men, in a form unseen by the people, Limpang-Tung goeth abroad, and, standing behind the minstrels in cities of song, waveth his hands above them to and fro, and the minstrels bend to their work, and the voice of the music ariseth; and mirth and melody abound in that city of song, and no one seeth Limpang-Tung as he standeth behind the minstrels.

But through the mists towards morning, in the dark when the minstrels sleep and mirth and melody have sunk to rest, Limpang-Tung goeth back again to his mountain land.

OF YOHARNETH-LAHAI

(The God of Little Dreams and Fancies)

Yaoharneth-Lahai is the god of little dreams and fancies.

All night he sendeth little dreams out of Pegana to please the people of Earth.

He sendeth little dreams to the poor man and to The King.

He is so busy to send his dreams to all before the night be ended that oft he forgetteth which be the poor man and which be The King.

To whom Yoharneth-Lahai cometh not with little dreams and sleep he must endure all night the laughter of the gods, with highest mockery, in Pegana.

All night long Yoharneth-Lahai giveth peace to cities until the dawn hour and the departing of Yoharneth-Lahai, when it is time for the gods to play with men again.

Whether the dreams and the fancies of Yoharneth-Lahai be false and the Things that are done in the Day be real, or the Things that are done in the Day be false and the dreams and the fancies of Yoharneth-Lahai be true, none knoweth saving only MANA-YOOD-SUSHAI, who hath not spoken.

OF ROON, THE GOD OF GOING, AND THE THOUSAND HOME GODS

Roon said: “There be gods of moving and gods of standing still, but I am the god of Going.”

It is because of Roon that the worlds are never still, for the moons and the worlds and the comet are stirred by the spirit of Roon, which saith: “Go! Go! Go!”

Roon met the Worlds all in the morning of Things, before there was light upon Pegana, and Roon danced before them in the Void, since when they are never still, Roon sendeth all streams to the Sea, and all the rivers to the soul of Slid.

Roon maketh the sign of Roon before the waters, and lo! they have left the hills; and Roon hath spoken in the ear of the North Wind that he may be still no more.

The footfall of Roon hath been heard at evening outside the houses of men, and thenceforth comfort and abiding know them no more. Before them stretcheth travel over all the lands, long miles, and never resting between their homes and their graves — and all at the bidding of Roon.

The Mountains have set no limit against Roon nor all the seas a boundary.

Whither Roon hath desired there must Roon’s people go, and the worlds and their streams and the winds.

I heard the whisper of Roon at evening, saying: “There are islands of spices to the South,” and the voice of Roon saying: “Go.”

And Roon said: “There are a thousand home gods, the little gods that sit before the hearth and mind the fire — there is one Roon.”

Roon saith in a whisper, in a whisper when none heareth, when the sun is low: “What doeth MANA-YOOD-SUSHAI?” Roon is no god that thou mayest worship by thy hearth, nor will he be benignant to thy home.

Offer to Roon thy toiling and thy speed, whose incense is the smoke of the camp fire to the South, whose song is the sound of going, whose temples stand beyond the farthest hills in his lands behind the East.

Yarinareth, Yarinareth, Yarinareth, which signifieth Beyond — these words be carved in letters of gold upon the arch of the great portal of the Temple of Roon that men have builded looking towards the East upon the

Sea, where Roon is carved as a giant trumpeter, with his trumpet pointing towards the East beyond the Seas.

Whoso heareth his voice, the voice of Roon at evening, he at once forsaketh the home gods that sit beside the hearth. These be the gods of the hearth: Pitsu, who stroketh the cat; Hobith who calms the dog; and Habaniah, the lord of glowing embers; and little Zumbiboo, the lord of dust; and old Gribaun, who sits in the heart of the fire to turn the wood to ash — all these be home gods, and live not in Pegana and be lesser than Roon.

There is also Kilooloogung, the lord of arising smoke, who taketh the smoke from the hearth and sendeth it to the sky, who is pleased if it reacheth Pegana, so that the gods of Pegana, speaking to the gods, say: "There is Kilooloogung doing the work on earth of Kilooloogung."

All these are gods so small that they be lesser than men, but pleasant gods to have beside the hearth; and often men have prayed to Kilooloogung, saying: "Thou whose smoke ascendeth to Pegana send up with it our prayers, that the gods may hear." And Kilooloogung, who is pleased that men should pray, stretches himself up all grey and lean, with his arms above his head, and sendeth his servant the smoke to seek Pegana, that the gods of Pegana may know that the people pray.

And Jabim is the Lord of broken things, who sitteth behind the house to lament the things that are cast away. And there he sitteth lamenting the broken things until the worlds be ended, or until someone cometh to mend the broken things. Or sometimes he sitteth by the river's edge to lament the forgotten things that drift upon it.

A kindly god is Jabim, whose heart is sore if anything be lost.

There is also Triboogie, the Lord of Dusk, whose children are the shadows, who sitteth in a corner far off from Habaniah and speaketh to none. But after Habaniah hath gone to sleep and old Gribaun hath blinked a hundred times, until he forgetteth which be wood or ash, then doth Triboogie send his children to run about the room and dance upon the walls, but never disturb the silence.

But when there is light again upon the worlds, and dawn comes dancing down the highway from Pegana, then does Triboogie retire into his corner, with his children all around him, as though they had never danced about the room. And the slaves of Habaniah and old Gribaun come and awake them from their sleep upon the hearth, and Pitsu strokes the cat, and Hobith calms

the dog, and Kilooloogung stretches aloft his arms towards Pegana, and Triboogie is very still, and his children asleep.

And when it is dark, all in the hour of Triboogie, Hish creepeth from the forest, the Lord of Silence, whose children are the bats, that have broken the command of their father, but in a voice that is ever so low. Hish husheth the mouse and all the whispers in the night; he maketh all noises still. Only the cricket rebelleth. But Hish hath set against him such a spell that after he hath cried a thousand times his voice may be heard no more but becometh part of the silence.

And when he hath slain all sounds Hish boweth low to the ground; then cometh into the house, with never a sound of feet, the god Yoharneth-Lahai.

But away in the forest whence Hish hath come Wohoon, the Lord of Noises in the Night, awaketh in his lair and creepeth round the forest to see whether it be true that Hish hath gone.

Then in some glade Wohoon lifts up his voice and cries aloud, that all the night may hear, that it is he, Wohoon, who is abroad in all the forest. And the wolf and the fox and the owl, and the great beasts and the small, lift up their voices to acclaim Wohoon. And there arise the sounds of voices and the stirring of leaves.

THE REVOLT OF THE HOME GODS

There be three broad rivers of the plain, born before memory or fable, whose mothers are three grey peaks and whose father was the storm. There names be Eimës, Zänës, and Segástrion.

And Eimës is the joy of lowing herds; and Zänës hath bowed his neck to the yoke of man, and carries the timber from the forest far up below the mountain; and Segástrion sings old songs to shepherd boys, singing of his childhood in a lone ravine and of how he once sprang down the mountain sides and far away into the plain to see the world, and of how one day at last he will find the sea. These be the rivers of the plain, wherein the plain rejoices. But old men tell, whose fathers heard it from the ancients, how once the lords of the three rivers of the plain rebelled against the law of the Worlds, and passed beyond their boundaries, and joined together and whelmed cities and slew men, saying: "We now play the game of the gods and slay men for our pleasure, and we be greater than the gods of Pegana."

And all the plain was flooded to the hills.

And Eimës, Zänës, and Segástrion sat upon the mountains, and spread their hands over their rivers that rebelled by their command.

But the prayer of men going upward found Pegana, and cried in the ear of the gods: "There be three home gods who slay us for their pleasure, and say that they be mightier than Pegana's gods, and play Their game with men."

Then were all the gods of Pegana very wroth; but They could not whelm the lords of the three rivers, because being home gods, though small, they were immortal.

And still the home gods spread their hands across their rivers, with their fingers wide apart, and the waters rose and rose, and the voice of their torrent grew louder, crying: "Are we not Eimës, Zänës, and Segástrion?"

Then Mung went down into a waste of Afrik, and came upon the drought Umbool as he sat in the desert upon iron rocks, clawing with miserly grasp at the bones of men and breathing hot.

And Mung stood before him as his dry sides heaved, and ever as they sank his hot breath blasted dry sticks and bones.

Then Mung said: "Friend of Mung! Go, thou and grin before the faces of Eimës, Zänës, and Segástrion till they see whether it be wise to rebel

against the gods of Pegana."

And Umbool answered: "I am the beast of Mung."

And Umbool came and crouched upon a hill upon the other side of the waters and grinned across them at the rebellious home gods.

And whenever Eimës, Zänës, and Segástrion stretched out their hands over their rivers they saw before their faces the grinning of Umbool; and because the grinning was like death in a hot and hideous land therefore they turned away and spread their hands no more over their rivers, and the waters sank and sank.

But when Umbool had grinned for thirty days the waters fell back into the river beds and the lords of the rivers slunk away back again to their homes: still Umbool sat and grinned.

Then Eimës sought to hide himself in a great pool beneath a rock, and Zänës crept into the middle of a wood, and Segástrion lay and panted on the sand — still Umbool sat and grinned.

And Eimës grew lean, and was forgotten, so that the men of the plain would say: "Here once was Eimës"; and Zänës scarce had strength to lead his river to the sea; and as Segástrion lay and panted a man stepped over his stream, and Segástrion said: "It is the foot of a man that has passed across my neck, and I have sought to be greater than the gods of Pegana."

Then said the gods of Pegana: "It is enough. We are the gods of Pegana, and none are equal."

Then Mung sent Umbool back to his waste in Afrik to breathe again upon the rocks, and parch the desert, and to sear the memory of Afrik into the brains of all who ever bring their bones away.

And Eimës, Zänës, and Segástrion sang again, and walked once more in their accustomed haunts, and played the game of Life and Death with fishes and frogs, but never essayed to play it any more with men, as do the gods of Pegana.

OF DOROZHAND

(Whose Eyes Regard The End)

Sitting above the lives of the people, and looking, doth Dorozhand see that which is to be.

The god of Destiny is Dorozhand. Upon whom have looked the eyes of Dorozhand he goeth forward to an end that naught may stay; he becometh the arrow from the bow of Dorozhand hurled forward at a mark he may not see — to the goal of Dorozhand. Beyond the thinking of men, beyond the sight of all the other gods, regard the eyes of Dorozhand.

He hath chosen his slaves. And them doth the destiny god drive onward where he will, who, knowing not whither nor even knowing why, feel only his scourge behind them or hear his cry before.

There is something that Dorozhand would fain achieve, and, therefore, hath he set the people striving, with none to cease or rest in all the worlds. But the gods of Pegana, speaking to the gods, say: "What is it that Dorozhand would fain achieve?"

It hath been written and said that not only the destinies of men are the care of Dorozhand but that even the gods of Pegana be not unconcerned by his will.

All the gods of Pegana have felt a fear, for they have seen a look in the eyes of Dorozhand that regardeth beyond the gods.

The reason and purpose of the Worlds is that there should be Life upon the Worlds, and Life is the instrument of Dorozhand wherewith he would achieve his end.

Therefore the Worlds go on, and the rivers run to the sea, and Life ariseth and flieth even in all the Worlds, and the gods of Pegana do the work of the gods — and all for Dorozhand. But when the end of Dorozhand hath been achieved there will be need no longer of Life upon the Worlds, nor any more a game for the small gods to play. Then will Kib tiptoe gently across Pegana to the resting-place in Highest Pegana of MANA-YOOD-SUSHAI, and touching reverently his hand, the hand that wrought the gods, say: "MANA-YOOD-SUSHAI, thou hast rested long."

And MANA-YOOD-SUSHAI shall say: "Not so; for I have rested for but fifty aeons of the gods, each of them scarce more than ten million mortal years of the Worlds that ye have made."

And then shall the gods be afraid when they find that MANA knoweth that they have made Worlds while he rested. And they shall answer: “Nay; but the Worlds came all of themselves.”

Then MANA-YOOD-SUSHAI, as one who would have done with an irksome matter, will lightly wave his hand — the hand that wrought the gods — and there shall be gods no more.

When there shall be three moons towards the north above the Star of the Abiding, three moons that neither wax nor wane but regard towards the North.

Or when the comet ceaseth from his seeking and stands still, not any longer moving among the Worlds but tarrying as one who rests after the end of search, then shall arise from resting, because it is THE END, the Greater One, who rested of old time, even MANA-YOOD-SUSHAI.

Then shall the Times that were be Times no more; and it may be that the old, dead days shall return from beyond the Rim, and we who have wept for them shall see those days again, as one who, returning from long travel to his home, comes suddenly on dear, remembered things.

For none shall know of MANA who hath rested for so long, whether he be a harsh or merciful god. It may be that he shall have mercy, and that these things shall be.

THE EYE IN THE WASTE

There lie seven deserts beyond Bodrahan, which is the city of the caravans' end. None goeth beyond. In the first desert lie the tracks of mighty travellers outward from Bodrahan, and some returning. And in the second lie only outward tracks, and none return.

The third is a desert untrodden by the feet of men.

The fourth is the desert of sand, and the fifth is the desert of dust, and the sixth is the desert of stones, and the seventh is the Desert of Deserts.

In the midst of the last of the deserts that lie beyond Bodrahan, in the centre of the Desert of Deserts, standeth the image that hath been hewn of old out of the living hill whose name is Ranorada — the eye in the waste.

About the base of Ranorada is carved in mystic letters that are vaster than the beds of streams these words:

To the god who knows.

Now, beyond the second desert are no tracks, and there is no water in all the seven deserts that lie beyond Bodrahan. Therefore came no man thither to hew that statue from the living hills, and Ranorada was wrought by the hands of gods. Men tell in Bodrahan, where the caravans end and all the drivers of the camels rest, how once the gods hewed Ranorada from the living hill, hammering all night long beyond the deserts. Moreover, they say that Ranorada is carved in the likeness of the god Hoodrazai, who hath found the secret of MANA-YOOD-SUSHAI, and knoweth the wherefore of the making of the gods.

They say that Hoodrazai stands all alone in Pegana and speaks to none because he knows what is hidden from the gods.

Therefore the gods have made his image in a lonely land as one who thinks and is silent — the eye in the waste.

They say that Hoodrazai had heard the murmers of MANA-YOOD-SUSHAI as he muttered to himself, and gleaned the meaning, and knew; and that he was the god of mirth and of abundant joy, but became from the moment of his knowing a mirthless god, even as his image, which regards the deserts beyond the track of man.

But the camel drivers, as they sit and listen to the tales of the old men in the market-place of Bodrahan, at evening, while the camels rest, say:

“If Hoodrazai is so very wise and yet is sad, let us drink wine, and banish wisdom to the wastes that lie beyond Bodrahan.” Therefore is there feasting and laughter all night long in the city where the caravans end.

All this the camel drivers tell when the caravans come in from Bodrahan; but who shall credit tales that camel drivers have heard from aged men in so remote a city?

OF THE THING THAT IS NEITHER GOD NOR BEAST

Seeing that wisdom is not in cities nor happiness in wisdom, and because Yadin the prophet was doomed by the gods ere he was born to go in search of wisdom, he followed the caravans to Bodrahan. There in the evening, where the camels rest, when the wind of the day ebbs out into the desert sighing amid the palms its last farewells and leaving the caravans still, he sent his prayer with the wind to drift into the desert calling to Hoodrazai.

And down the wind his prayer went calling: “Why do the gods endure, and play their game with men? Why doth not Skarl forsake his drumming, and MANA cease to rest?” and the echo of seven deserts answered: “Who knows? Who knows?”

But out in the waste, beyond the seven deserts where Ranorada looms enormous in the dusk, at evening his prayer was heard; and from the rim of the waste whither had gone his prayer, came three flamingoes flying, and their voices said: “Going South, Going South” at every stroke of their wings.

But as they passed by the prophet they seemed so cool and free and the desert so blinding and hot that he stretched up his arms towards them. Then it seemed happy to fly and pleasant to follow behind great white wings, and he was with the three flamingoes up in the cool above the desert, and their voices cried before him: “Going South, Going South,” and the desert below him mumbled: “Who knows? Who knows?”

Sometimes the earth stretched up towards them with peaks of mountains, sometimes it fell away in steep ravines, blue rivers sang to them as they passed above them, or very faintly came the song of breezes in lone orchards, and far away the sea sang mighty dirges of old forsaken isles. But it seemed that in all the world there was nothing only to be going South.

It seemed that somewhere the South was calling to her own, and that they were going South.

But when the prophet saw that they had passed above the edge of Earth, and that far away to the North of them lay the Moon, he perceived that he was following no mortal birds but some strange messengers of Hoodrazai whose nest had lain in one of Pegana’s vales below the mountains whereon sit the gods.

Still they went South, passing by all the Worlds and leaving them to the North, till only Araxes, Zadres, and Hyraglion lay still to the South of them, where great Ingazi seemed only a point of light, and Yo and Mindo could be seen no more.

Still they went South till they passed below the South and came to the Rim of the Worlds.

There there is neither South nor East nor West, but only North and Beyond; there is only North of it where lie the Worlds, and Beyond it where lies the Silence, and the Rim is a mass of rocks that were never used by the gods when They made the Worlds, and on it sat Trogool. Trogool is the Thing that is neither god nor beast, who neither howls nor breathes, only *It* turns over the leaves of a great book, black and white, black and white for ever until THE END.

And all that is to be is written in the book is also all that was.

When *It* turneth a black page it is night, and when *It* turneth a white page it is day.

Because it is written that there are gods — there are the gods.

Also there is writing about thee and me until the page where our names no more are written.

Then as the prophet watched *It*, Trogool turned a page — a black one, and night was over, and day shone on the Worlds.

Trogool is the Thing that men in many countries have called by many names, *It* is the Thing that sits behind the gods, whose book is the Scheme of Things.

But when Yadin saw that old remembered days were hidden away with the part that *It* had turned, and knew that upon one whose name is writ no more the last page had turned for ever a thousand pages back. Then did he utter his prayer in the fact of Trogool who only turns the pages and never answers prayer. He prayed in the face of Trogool: “Only turn back thy pages to the name of one which is writ no more, and far away upon a place named Earth shall rise the prayers of a little people that acclaim the name of Trogool, for there is indeed far off a place called Earth where men shall pray to Trogool.”

Then spake Trogool who turns the pages and never answers prayer, and his voice was like the murmurs of the waste at night when echoes have been lost: “Though the whirlwind of the South should tug with his claws at a page that hath been turned yet shall he not be able to ever turn it back.”

Then because of words in the book that said that it should be so, Yadin found himself lying in the desert where one gave him water, and afterwards carried him on a camel into Bodrahan.

There some said that he had but dreamed when thirst seized him while he wandered among the rocks in the desert. But certain aged men of Bodrahan say that indeed there sitteth somewhere a Thing that is called Trogool, that is neither god nor beast, that turneth the leaves of a book, black and white, black and white, until he come to the words: *Mai Doon Izahn*, which means The End For Ever, and book and gods and worlds shall be no more.

YONATH THE PROPHET

Yonath was the first among prophets who uttered unto men.

These are the words of Yonath, the first among all prophets:

There be gods upon Pegana.

Upon a night I slept. And in my sleep Pegana came very near. And Pegana was full of gods.

I saw the gods beside me as one might see wonted things.

Only I saw not MANA-YOOD-SUSHAI.

And in that hour, in the hour of my sleep, I knew.

And the end and the beginning of my knowing, and all of my knowing that there was, was this — that Man Knoweth Not.

Seek thou to find at night the utter edge of the darkness, or seek to find the birthplace of the rainbow where he leapeth upward from the hills, only seek not concerning the wherefore of the making of the gods.

The gods have set a brightness upon the farther side of the Things to Come that they may appear more felititous to men than the Things that Are.

To the gods the Things to Come are but as the Things that Are, and nothing altereth in Pegana.

The gods, although not merciful, are not ferocious gods. They are the destroyers of the Days that Were, but they set a glory about the Days to Be.

Man must endure the Days that Are, but the gods have left him his ignorance as a solace.

Seek not to know. Thy seeking will weary thee, and thou wilt return much worn, to rest at last about the place from whence thou settest out upon thy seeking.

Seek not to know. Even I, Yonath, the oldest prophet, burdened with the wisdom of great years, and worn with seeking, know only that man knoweth not.

Once I set out seeking to know all things. Now I know one thing only, and soon the Years will carry me away.

The path of my seeking, that leadeth to seeking again, must be trodden by very many more, when Yonath is no longer even Yonath.

Set not thy foot upon that path.

Seek not to know.
These be the Words of Yonath.

YUG THE PROPHET

When the Years had carries away Yonath, and Yonath was dead, there was no longer a prophet among men.

And still men sought to know.

Therefore they said unto Yug: “Be thou our prophet, and know all things, and tell us concerning the wherefore of It All.”

And Yug said: “I know all things.” And men were pleased.

And Yug said of the Beginning that it was in Yug’s own garden, and of the End that it was in the sight of Yug.

And men forgot Yug.

One day Yug saw Mung behind the hills making the sign of Mung. And Yug was Yug no more.

ALHIRETH-HOTEP THE PROPHET

When Yug was Yug no more men said unto Alhireth-Hotep: “Be thou our prophet, and be as wise as Yug.”

And Alhireth-Hotep said: “I am as wise as Yug.” And men were very glad.

And Alhireth-Hotep said of Life and Death: “These be the affairs of Alhireth-Hotep.” And men brought gifts to him.

One day Alhireth-Hotep wrote in a book: “Alhireth-Hotep knoweth
All Things, for he hath spoken with Mung.”

And Mung stepped from behind him, making the sign of Mung, saying: “Knowest thou All Things, then, Alhireth-Hotep?” And Alhireth-Hotep became among the Things that Were.

KABOK THE PROPHET

When Alhireth-Hotep was among the Things that Were, and still men sought to know, they said unto Kabok: “Be thou as wise as was Alhireth-Hotep.”

And Kabok grew wise in his own sight and in the sight of men.

And Kabok said: “Mung maketh his signs against men or withholdeth it by the advice of Kabok.”

And he said unto one: “Thou hast sinned against Kabok, therefore will Mung make the sign of Mung against thee.” And to another: “Thou has brought Kabok gifts, therefore shall Mung forbear to make against thee the sign of Mung.”

One night as Kabok fattened upon the gifts that men had brought him he heard the tread of Mung treading in the garden of Kabok about his house at night.

And because the night was very still it seemed most evil to Kabok that Mung should be treading in his garden, without the advice of Kabok, about his house at night.

And Kabok, who knew All Things, grew afraid, for the treading was very loud and the night still, and he knew not what lay behind the back of Mung, which none had ever seen.

But when the morning grew to brightness, and there was light upon the Worlds, and Mung trod no longer in the garden, Kabok forgot his fears, and said: “Perhaps it was but a herd of cattle that stampeded in the garden of Kabok.”

And Kabok went about his business, which was that of knowing All Things, and telling All Things unto men, and making light of Mung.

But that night Mung trod again in the garden of Kabok, about his house at night, and stood before the window of the house like a shadow standing erect, so that Kabok knew indeed that it was Mung.

And a great fear fell upon the throat of Kabok, so that his speech was hoarse; and he cried out: “Thou art Mung!”

And Mung slightly inclined his head, and went on to tread in the garden of Kabok, about his house at night.

And Kabok lay and listened with horror at his heart.

But when the second morning grew to brightness, and there was light upon the Worlds, Mung went from treading in the garden of Kabok; and for a little while Kabok hoped, but looked with great dread for the coming of the third night.

And when the third night was come, and the bat had gone to his home, and the wind had sank, the night was very still.

And Kabok lay and listened, to whom the wings of the night flew very slow.

But, ere night met the morning upon the highway between Pegana and the Worlds, there came the tread of Mung in the garden of Kabok towards Kabok's door.

And Kabok fled out of his house as flees a hunted beast and flung himself before Mung.

And Mung made the sign of Mung, pointing towards THE END.

And the fears of Kabok had rest from troubling Kabok any more, for they and he were among accomplished things.

OF THE CALAMITY THAT BEFEL YUN-ILARA BY THE SEA, AND OF THE BUILDING OF THE TOWER OF THE ENDING OF DAYS

When Kabok and his fears had rest the people sought a prophet who should have no fear of Mung, whose hand was against the prophets.

And at last they found Yun-Ilara, who tended sheep and had no fear of Mung, and the people brought him to the town that he might be their prophet.

And Yun-Ilara builded a tower towards the sea that looked upon the setting of the Sun. And he called it the Tower of the Ending of Days.

And about the ending of the day would Yun-Ilara go up to his tower's top and look towards the setting of the Sun to cry his curses against Mung, crying: "O Mung! whose hand is against the Sun, whom men abhor but worship because they fear thee, here stands and speaks a man who fears thee not. Assassin lord of murder and dark things, abhorrent, merciless, make thou the sign of Mung against me when thou wilt, but until silence settles upon my lips, because of the sign of Mung, I will curse Mung to his face." And the people in the street below would gaze up with wonder towards Yun-Ilara, who had no fear of Mung, and brought him gifts; only in their homes after the falling of the night would they pray again with reverence to Mung. But Mung said: "Shall a man curse a god?"

And still Mung came not nigh to Yun-Ilara as he cried his curses against Mung from his tower towards the sea.

And Sish throughout the Worlds hurled Time away, and slew the Hours that had served him well, and called up more out of the timeless waste that lieth beyond the Worlds, and drave them forth to assail all things. And Sish cast a whiteness over the hairs of Yun-Ilara, and ivy about his tower, and weariness over his limbs, for Mung passed by him still.

And when Sish became a god less durable to Yun-Ilara than ever Mung hath been he ceased at last to cry from his tower's top his curses against Mung whenever the sun went down, till there came the day when weariness of the gift of Kib fell heavily upon Yun-Ilara.

Then from the tower of the Ending of Days did Yun-Ilara cry out thus to Mung, crying: "O Mung! O loveliest of the gods! O Mung, most dearly to be desired! thy gift of Death is the heritage of Man, with ease and rest and

silence and returning to the Earth. Kib giveth but toil and trouble; and Sish, he sendeth regrets with each of his hours wherewith he assails the World. Yoharneth-Lahai cometh nigh no more. I can no longer be glad with Limpang-Tung. When the other gods forsake him a man hath only Mung."

But Mung said: "Shall a man curse a god?"

And every day and all night long did Yun-Ilara cry aloud: "Ah, now for the hour of the mourning of many, and the pleasant garlands of flowers and the tears, and the moist, dark earth. Ah, for repose down underneath the grass, where the firm feet of the trees grip hold upon the world, where never shall come the wind that now blows through my bones, and the rain shall come warm and trickling, not driven by storm, where is the easeful falling asunder of bone from bone in the dark." Thus prayed Yun-Ilara, who had cursed in his folly and youth, while never heeded Mung.

Still from a heap of bones that are Yun-Ilara still, lying about the ruined base of the tower that once he builded, goes up a shrill voice with the wind crying out for the mercy of Mung, if any such there be.

OF HOW THE GODS WHELMED SIDITH

There was dole in the valley of Sidith. For three years there had been pestilence, and in the last of the three a famine; moreover, there was imminence of war.

Throughout all Sidith men died night and day, and night and day within the Temple of All the gods save One (for none may pray to MANA-YOOD-SUSHAI) did the priests of the gods pray hard.

For they said: "For a long while a man may hear the droning of little insects and yet not be aware that he hath heard them, so may the gods not hear our prayers at first until they have been very oft repeated. But when your praying has troubled the silence long it may be that some god as he strolls in Pegana's glades may come on one of our lost prayers, that flutters like a butterfly tossed in storm when all its wings are broken; then if the gods be merciful they may ease our fears in Sidith, or else they may crush us, being petulant gods, and so we shall see trouble in Sidith no longer, with its pestilence and dearth and fears of war."

But in the fourth year of the pestilence and in the second year of the famine, and while still there was imminence of war, came all the people of Sidith to the door of the Temple of All the gods save One, where none may enter but the priests — but only leave gifts and go.

And there the people cried out: "O High Prophet of All the gods save One, Priest of Kib, Priest of Sish, and Priest of Mung, Teller of the mysteries of Dorozhand, Receiver of the gifts of the People, and Lord of Prayer, what doest thou within the Temple of All the gods save One?"

And Arb-Rin-Hadith, who was the High Prophet, answered: "I pray for all the People."

But the people answered: "O High Prophet of All the gods save One, Priest of Kib, Priest of Sish, and Priest of Mung, Teller of the mysteries of Dorozhand, Receiver of the gifts of the People, and Lord of Prayer, for four long years hast thou prayed with the priests of all thine order, while we brought ye gifts and died. Now, therefore, since They have not heard thee in four grim years, thou must go and carry to Their faces the prayer of the

people of Sidith when They go to drive the thunder to his pasture upon the mountain Aghrinaun, or else there shall no longer be gifts upon thy temple door, whenever falls the dew, that thou and thine order may fatten.

"Then thou shalt say before Their faces: 'O All the gods save One, Lords of the Worlds, whose child is the eclipse, take back thy pestilence from Sidith, for ye have played the game of the gods too long with the people of Sidith, who would fain have done with the gods'."

Then in great fear answered the High Prophet, saying: "What if the gods be angry and whelm Sidith?" And the people answered: "Then are we sooner done with pestilence and famine and the imminence of war."

That night the thunder howled upon Aghrinaun, which stood a peak above all others in the land of Sidith. And the people took Arb-Rin-Hadith from his Temple and drave him to Aghrinaun, for they said: "There walk to-night upon the mountain All the gods save One."

And Arb-Rin-Hadith went trembling to the gods.

Next morning, white and frightened from Aghrinaun, came Arb-Rin-Hadith back into the valley, and there spake to the people, saying: "The faces of the gods are iron and their mouths set hard. There is no hope from the gods."

Then said the people: "Thou shalt go to MANA-YOOD-SUSHAI, to whom no man may pray: seek him upon Aghrinaun where it lifts clear into the stillness before morning, and on its summit, where all things seem to rest surely there rests also MANA-YOOD-SUSHAI. Go to him, and say: 'Thou hast made evil gods, and They smite Sidith.' Perchance he hath forgotten all his gods, or hath not heard of Sidith. Thou hast escaped the thunder of the gods, surely thou shalt also escape the stillness of MANA-YOOD-SUSHAI."

Upon a morning when the sky and lakes were clear and the world still, and Aghrinaun was stiller than the world, Arb-Rin-Hadith crept in fear towards the slopes of Aghrinaun because the people were urgent.

All that day men saw him climbing. At night he rested near the top. But ere the morning of the day that followed, such as rose early saw him in the silence, a speck against the blue, stretch up his arms upon the summit to MANA-YOOD-SUSHAI. Then instantly they saw him not, nor was he ever seen of men again who had dared to trouble the stillness of MANA-YOOD-SUSHAI.

Such as now speak of Sidith tell of a fierce and potent tribe that smote away a people in a valley enfeebled by pestilence, where stood a temple to “All the gods save One” in which was no high priest.

OF HOW IMBAUN BECAME HIGH PROPHET IN ARADEC OF ALL THE GODS SAVE ONE

Imbaun was to be made High Prophet in Aradec, of All the Gods save One.

From Ardra, Rhoodra, and the lands beyond came all High Prophets of the Earth to the Temple in Aradec of All the gods save One.

And then they told Imbaun how The Secret of Things was upon the summit of the dome of the Hall of Night, but faintly writ, and in an unknown tongue.

Midway in the night, between the setting and the rising sun, they led Imbaun into the Hall of Night, and said to him, chaunting altogether: "Imbaun, Imbaun, Imbaun, look up to the roof, where is writ The Secret of Things, but faintly, and in an unknown tongue."

And Imbaun looked up, but darkness was so deep within the Hall of Night that Imbaun saw not even the High Prophets who came from Ardra, Rhoodra, and the lands beyond, nor saw he aught in the Hall of Night at all.

Then called the High Prophets: "What seest thou, Imbaun?"

And Imbaun said: "I see naught."

Then called the High Prophets: "What knowest thou Imbaun?"

And Imbaun said: "I know naught."

Then spake the High Prophet of Eld of All the gods save One, who is first on Earth of prophets: "O Imbaun! we have all looked upwards in the Hall of Night towards the secret of Things, and ever it was dark, and the Secret faint and in an unknown tongue. And now thou knowest what all High Prophets know."

And Imbaun answered: "I know."

So Imbaun became High Prophet in Aradec of All the gods save One, and prayed for all the people, who knew not that there was darkness in the Hall of Night or that the secret was writ faint and in an unknown tongue.

These are the words of Imbaun that he wrote in a book that all the people might know:

“In the twentieth night of the nine hundredth moon, as night came up the valley, I performed the mystic rites of each of the gods in the temple as is my wont, lest any of the gods should grow angry in the night and whelm us while we slept.

“And as I uttered the last of certain secret words I fell asleep in the temple, for I was weary, with my head against the altar of Dorozhand. Then in the stillness, as I slept, there entered Dorozhand by the temple door in the guise of a man, and touched me on the shoulder, and I awoke.

“But when I saw that his eyes shone blue and lit the whole of the temple I knew that he was a god though he came in mortal guise. And Dorozhand said: ‘Prophet of Dorozhand, behold that the people may know.’ And he showed me the paths of Sish stretching far down into the future time. Then he bade me arise and follow whither he pointed, speaking no words but commanding with his eyes.

“Therefore upon the twentieth night of the nine hundredth moon I walked with Dorozhand adown the paths of Sish into the future time.

“And ever beside the way did men slay men. And the sum of their slaying was greater than the slaying of the pestilence of any of the evils of the gods.

“And cities arose and shed their houses in dust, and ever the desert returned again to its own, and covered over and hid the last of all that had troubled its repose.

“And still men slew men.

“And I came at last to a time when men set their yoke no longer upon beasts but made them beasts of iron.

“And after that did men slay men with mists.

“Then, because the slaying exceeded their desire, there came peace upon the world that was brought by the hand of the slayer, and men slew men no more.

“And cities multiplied, and overthrew the desert and conquered its repose.

“And suddenly I beheld that THE END was near, for there was a stirring above Pegana as of One who grows weary of resting, and I saw the hound Time crouch to spring, with his eyes upon the throats of the gods, shifting from throat to throat, and the drumming of Skarl grew faint.

“And if a god may fear, it seemed that there was fear upon the face of Dorozhand, and he seized me by the hand and led me back along the paths

of Time that I might not see THE END.

"Then I saw cities rise out of the dust again and fall back into the desert whence they had arisen; and again I slept in the Temple of All the gods save One, with my head against the altar of Dorozhand.

"Then again the Temple was alight, but not with light from the eyes of Dorozhand; only dawn came all blue out of the East and shone through the arches of the Temple. Then I awoke and performed the morning rites and mysteries of All the gods save One, lest any of the gods be angry in the day and take away the Sun.

"And I knew that because I who had been so near to it had not beheld THE END that a man should never behold it or know the doom of the gods. This They have hidden."

OF HOW IMBAUN MET ZODRAK

The prophet of the gods lay resting by the river to watch the stream run by.

And as he lay he pondered on the Scheme of Things and the works of all the gods. And it seemed to the prophet of the gods as he watched the stream run by that the Scheme was a right scheme and the gods benignant gods; yet there was sorrow in the Worlds. It seemed that Kib was bountiful, that Mung calmed all who suffer, that Sish dealt not too harshly with the hours, and that all the gods were good; yet there was sorrow in the Worlds.

Then said the prophet of the gods as he watched the stream run by: "There is some other god of whom naught is writ." And suddenly the prophet was aware of an old man who bemoaned beside the river, crying: "Alas! alas!"

His face was marked by the sign and the seal of exceeding many years, and there was yet vigour in his frame. These be the words of the prophet that he wrote in his book: "I said: 'Who art thou that bemoans beside the river?' And he answered: 'I am the fool.' I said: 'Upon thy brow are the marks of wisdom such as is stored in books.' He said: 'I am Zodrak. Thousands of years ago I tended sheep upon a hill that sloped towards the sea. The gods have many moods. Thousands of years ago They were in a mirthful mood. They said: 'Let Us call up a man before Us that We may laugh in Pegana.'"

"'And Their eyes that looked on me saw not me alone but also saw THE BEGINNING and THE END and all the Worlds besides. Then said the gods, speaking as speak the gods: "Go, back to thy sheep."

"'But I, who am the fool, had heard it said on earth that whoso seeth the gods upon Pegana becometh as the gods, if so he demand to Their faces, who may not slay him who hath looked them in the eyes.

"'And I, the fool, said: "I have looked in the eyes of the gods, and I demand what a man may demand of the gods when he hath seen Them in Pegana." And the gods inclined Their heads and Hoodrazai said: "It is the law of the gods."

"'And I, who was only a shepherd, how could I know?

"'I said: "I will make men rich." And the gods said: "What is rich?"

"'And I said: "I will send them love." And the gods said: "What is love?" And I sent gold into the Worlds, and, alas! I sent with it poverty and strife.

And I sent love into the Worlds, and with it grief.

“‘And now I have mixed gold and love most woefully together, and I can never remedy what I have done, for the deeds of the gods are done, and nothing may undo them.

“‘Then I said: “I will give men wisdom that they may be glad.” And those who got my wisdom found that they knew nothing, and from having been happy became glad no more.

“‘And I, who would make men happy, have made them sad, and I have spoiled the beautiful scheme of the gods.

“‘And now my hand is for ever on the handle of Their plough. I was only a shepherd, and how should I have known?

“‘Now I come to thee as thou restest by the river to ask of thee thy forgiveness, for I would fain have the forgiveness of a man.’

“And I answered: ‘O Lord of seven skies, whose children are the storms, shall a man forgive a god?’

“He answered: ‘Men have sinned not against the gods as the gods have sinned against men since I came into Their councils.’

“And I, the prophet, answered: ‘O Lord of seven skies, whose plaything is the thunder, thou art amongst the gods, what need hast thou for words from any man?’

“He said: ‘Indeed I am amongst the gods, who speak to me as they speak to other gods, yet is there always a smile about Their mouths, and a look in Their eyes that saith: “Thou wert a man.”’

“I said: ‘O Lord of seven skies, about whose feet the Worlds are as drifted sand, because thou biddest me, I, a man, forgive thee.’

“And he answered: ‘I was but a shepherd, and I could not know.’
Then he was gone.”

PEGANA

The prophet of the gods cried out to the gods: “O! All the gods save One” for none may pray to MANA-YOOD-SUSHAI, “where shall the life of a man abide when Mung hath made against his body the sign of Mung? — for the people with whom ye play have sought to know.”

But the gods answered, speaking through the mist:

“Though thou shouldst tell thy secrets to the beasts, even that the beasts should understand, yet will not the gods divulge the secret of the gods to thee, that gods and beasts and men shall be all the same, all knowing the same things.”

That night Yoharneth-Lahai same to Aradec, and said unto Imbaun: “Wherefore wouldst thou know the secret of the gods that not the gods may tell thee?

“When the wind blows not, where, then, is the wind?

“Or when thou art not living, where art thou?

“What should the wind care for the hours of calm or thou for death?

“Thy life is long, Eternity is short.

“So short that, shouldst thou die and Eternity should pass, and after the passing of Eternity thou shouldst live again, thou wouldst say: ‘I closed mine eyes but for an instant.’

“There is an eternity behind thee as well as one before. Hast thou bewailed the aeons that passed without thee, who art so much afraid of the aeons that shall pass?”

Then said the prophet: “How shall I tell the people that the gods have not spoken and their prophet doth not know? For then should I be prophet no longer, and another would take the people’s gifts instead of me.”

Then said Imbaun to the people: “The gods have spoken, saying: ‘O Imbaun, Our prophet, it is as the people believe whose wisdom hath discovered the secret of the gods, and the people when they die shall come to Pegana, and there live with the gods, and there have pleasure without toil. And Pegana is a place all white with the peaks of mountains, on each of them a god, and the people shall lie upon the slopes of the mountains each under the god that he hath worshipped most when his lot was in the Worlds. And there shall music beyond thy dreaming come drifting through the scent of all the orchards in the Worlds, with somewhere someone singing an old song that shall be as a half-remembered thing. And there shall be gardens

that have always sunlight, and streams that are lost in no sea beneath skies for ever blue. And there shall be no rain nor no regrets. Only the roses that in highest Pegana have achieved their prime shall shed their petals in showers at thy feet, and only far away on the forgotten earth shall voices drift up to thee that cheered thee in thy childhood about the gardens of thy youth. And if thou sighest for any memory of earth because thou hearest unforgotten voices, then will the gods send messengers on wings to soothe thee in Pegana, saying to them: "There one sigheth who hath remembered Earth." And they shall make Pegana more seductive for thee still, and they shall take thee by the hand and whisper in thine ear till the old voices are forgot.

"'And besides the flowers of Pegana there shall have climbed by then until it hath reached to Pegana the rose that clambered about the house where thou wast born. Thither shall also come the wandering echoes of all such music as charmed thee long ago.

"'Moreover, as thou sittest on the orchard lawns that clothe Pegana's mountains, and as thou hearkenest to melody that sways the souls of the gods, there shall stretch away far down beneath thee the great unhappy Earth, till gazing from rapture upon sorrows thou shalt be glad that thou wert dead.

"'And from the three great mountains that stand aloof and over all the others — Grimbol, Zeebol, and Trehagobol — shall blow the wind of the morning and the wind of all the day, borne upon the wings of all the butterflies that have died upon the Worlds, to cool the gods and Pegana.

"'Far through Pegana a silvery fountain, lured upward by the gods from the Central Sea, shall fling its waters aloft, and over the highest of Pegana's peaks, above Trehagobol, shall burst into gleaming mists, to cover Highest Pegana, and make a curtain about the resting-place of MANA-YOOD-SUSHAI.

"'Alone, still and remote below the base of one of the inner mountains, lieth a great blue pool.

"'Whoever looketh down into its waters may behold all his life that was upon the Worlds and all the deeds that he hath done.

"'None walk by the pool and none regard its depths, for all in Pegana have suffered and all have sinned some sin, and it lieth in the pool.

"'And there is no darkness in Pegana, for when night hath conquered the sun and stilled the Worlds and turned the white peaks of Pegana into grey

then shine the blue eyes of the gods like sunlight on the sea, where each god sits upon his mountain.

"'And at the Last, upon some afternoon, perhaps in summer, shall the gods say, speaking to the gods: "What is the likeness of MANA-YOOD-SUSHAI and what THE END?"

"'And then shall MANA-YOOD-SUSHAI draw back with his hand the mists that cover his resting, saying: "This is the Face of MANA-YOOD-SUSHAI and this THE END.""'

Then said the people to the prophet: "Shall not black hills draw round in some forsaken land, to make a vale-wide cauldron wherein the molten rock shall seethe and roar, and where the crags of mountains shall be hurled upward to the surface and bubble and go down again, that there our enemies may boil for ever?"

And the prophet answered: "It is writ large about the bases of Pegana's mountains, upon which sit the gods: 'Thine Enemies Are Forgiven.'"

THE SAYINGS OF IMBAUN

The Prophet of the gods said: “Yonder beside the road there sitteth a false prophet; and to all who seek to know the hidden days he saith: ‘Upon the morrow the King shall speak to thee as his chariot goeth by.’”

Moreover, all the people bring him gifts, and the false prophet hath more to listen to his words than hath the Prophet of the gods.

Then said Imbaun: “What knoweth the Prophet of the gods? I know only that I and men know naught concerning the gods or aught concerning men. Shall I, who am their prophet, tell the people this?

“For wherefore have the people chosen prophets but that they should speak the hopes of the people, and tell the people that their hopes be true?”

The false prophet saith: “Upon the morrow the king shall speak to thee.”

Shall not I say: “Upon The Morrow the gods shall speak with thee as thou restest upon Pegana?”

So shall the people be happy, and know that their hopes be true who have believed the words that they have chosen a prophet to say.

But what shall know the Prophet of the gods, to whom none may come to say: “Thy hopes are true,” for whom none may make strange signs before his eyes to quench his fear of death, for whom alone the chaunt of his priests availeth naught?

The Prophet of the gods hath sold his happiness for wisdom, and hath given his hopes for the people.

Said also Imbaun: “When thou art angry at night observe how calm be the stars; and shall small ones rail when there is such a calm among the great ones? Or when thou art angry by day regard the distant hills, and see the calm that doth adorn their faces. Shalt thou be angry while they stand so serene?

“Be not angry with men, for they are driven as thou art by Dorozhand. Do bullocks goad one another on whom the same yoke rests?

“And be not angry with Dorozhand, for then thou beatest thy bare fingers against iron cliffs.

“All that is is so because it was to be. Rail not, therefore, against what is, for it was all to be.”

And Imbaun said: “The Sun ariseth and maketh a glory about all the things that he seeth, and drop by drop he turneth the common dew to every kind of gem. And he maketh a splendour in the hills.

“And also man is born. And there rests a glory about the gardens of his youth. Both travel afar to do what Dorozhand would have them do.

“Soon now the sun will set, and very softly come twinkling in the stillness all the stars.

“Also man dieth. And quietly about his grave will all the mourners weep.

“Will not his life arise again somewhere in all the worlds? Shall he not again behold the gardens of his youth? Or does he set to end?”

OF HOW IMBAUN SPAKE OF DEATH TO THE KING

There trod such pestilence in Aradec that, the King as he looked abroad out of his palace saw men die. And when the King saw Death he feared that one day even the King should die. Therefore he commanded guards to bring before him the wisest prophet that should be found in Aradec.

Then heralds came to the temple of All the gods save One, and cried aloud, having first commanded silence, crying: “Rhazahan, King over Aradec, Prince by right of Ildun and Ildaun, and Prince by conquest of Pathia, Ezek, and Azhan, Lord of the Hills, to the High Prophet of All the gods save One sends salutations.”

Then they bore him before the King.

The King said unto the prophet: “O Prophet of All the gods save One, shall I indeed die?”

And the prophet answered: “O King! thy people may not rejoice for ever, and some day the King will die.”

And the King answered: “This may be so, but certainly thou shalt die. It may be that one day I shall die, but till then the lives of the people are in my hands.”

Then guards led the prophet away.

And there arose prophets in Aradec who spake not of death to Kings.

OF OOD

Men say that if thou comest to Sundari, beyond all the plains, and shalt climb to his summit before thou art seized by the avalanche which sitteth always on his slopes, that then there lie before thee many peaks. And if thou shalt climb these and cross their valleys (of which there be seven and also seven peaks) thou shalt come at last to the land of forgotten hills, where amid many valleys and white snow there standeth the "Great Temple of One god Only."

Therein is a dreaming prophet who doeth naught, and a drowsy priesthood about him.

These be the priests of MANA-YOOD-SUSHAI.

Within the temple it is forbidden to work, also it is forbidden to pray. Night differeth not from day within its doors. They rest as MANA rests. And the name of their prophet is Ood.

Ood is a greater prophet than any of all the prophets of Earth, and it hath been said by some that were Ood and his priests to pray chaunting all together and calling upon MANA-YOOD-SUSHAI that MANA-YOOD-SUSHAI would then awake, for surely he would hear the prayers of his own prophet — then would there be Worlds no more.

There is also another way to the land of forgotten hills, which is a smooth road and a straight, that lies through the heart of the mountains. But for certain hidden reasons it were better for thee to go by the peaks and snow, even though thou shouldst perish by the way, that thou shouldst seek to come to the house of Ood by the smooth, straight road.

THE RIVER

There arises a river in Pegana that is neither a river of water nor yet a river of fire, and it flows through the skies and the Worlds to the Rim of the Worlds, a river of silence. Through all the Worlds are sounds, the noises of moving, and the echoes of voices and song; but upon the River is no sound ever heard, for there all echoes die.

The River arises out of the drumming of Skarl, and flows for ever between banks of thunder, until it comes to the waste beyond the Worlds, behind the farthest star, down to the Sea of Silence.

I lay in the desert beyond all cities and sounds, and above me flowed the River of Silence through the sky; and on the desert's edge night fought against the Sun, and suddenly conquered.

Then on the River I saw the dream-built ship of the god Yoharneth-Lahai, whose great prow lifted grey into the air above the River of Silence.

Her timbers were olden dreams dreamed long ago, and poets' fancies made her tall, straight masts, and her rigging was wrought out of the people's hopes.

Upon her deck were rowers with dream-made oars, and the rowers were the people of men's fancies, and princes of old story and people who had died, and people who had never been.

These swung forward and swung back to row Yoharneth-Lahai through the Worlds with never a sound of rowing. For ever on every wind float up to Pegana the hopes and the fancies of the people which have no home in the Worlds, and there Yoharneth-Lahai weaves them into dreams, to take them to the people again.

And every night in his dream-built ship Yoharneth-Lahai setteth forth, with all his dreams on board, to take again their old hopes back to the people and all forgotten fancies.

But ere the day comes back to her own again, and all the conquering armies of the dawn hurl their red lances in the face of the night, Yoharneth-Lahai leaves the sleeping Worlds, and rows back up the River of Silence, that flows from Pegana into the Sea of Silence that lies beyond the Worlds.

And the name of the River is Imrana the River of Silence. All they that be weary of the sound of cities and very tired of clamour creep down in the night-time to Yoharneth-Lahai's ship, and going aboard it, among the

dreams and the fancies of old times, lie down upon the deck, and pass from sleeping to the River, while Mung, behind them, makes the sign of Mung because they would have it so. And, lying there upon the deck among their own remembered fancies, and songs that were never sung, and they drift up Imrana ere the dawn, where the sound of the cities comes not, nor the voice of the thunder is heard, nor the midnight howl of Pain as he gnaws at the bodies of men, and far away and forgotten bleat the small sorrows that trouble all the Worlds.

But where the River flows through Pegana's gates, between the great twin constellations Yum and Gothum, where Yum stands sentinel upon the left and Gothum upon the right, there sits Sirami, the lord of All Forgetting. And, when the ship draws near, Sirami looketh with his sapphire eyes into the faces and beyond them of those that were weary of cities, and as he gazes, as one that looketh before him remembering naught, he gently waves his hands. And amid the waving of Sirami's hands there fall from all that behold him all their memories, save certain things that may not be forgotten even beyond the Worlds.

It hath been said that when Skarl ceases to drum, and MANA-YOOD-SUSHAI awakes, and the gods of Pegana know that it is THE END, that then the gods will enter galleons of gold, and with dream-born rowers glide down Imrana (who knows whither or why?) till they come where the River enters the Silent Sea, and shall there be gods of nothing, where nothing is, and never a sound shall come. And far away upon the River's banks shall bay their old hound Time, that shall seek to rend his masters; while MANA-YOOD-SUSHAI shall think some other plan concerning gods and worlds.

THE BIRD OF DOOM AND THE END

For at the last shall the thunder, fleeing to escape from the doom of the gods, roar horribly among the Worlds; and Time, the hound of the gods, shall bay hungrily at his masters because he is lean with age.

And from the innermost of Pegana's vales shall the bird of doom, Mosahn, whose voice is like the trumpet, soar upward with boisterous beatings of his wings above Pegana's mountains and the gods, and there with his trumpet voice acclaim THE END.

Then in the tumult and amid the fury of their hound the gods shall make for the last time in Pegana the sign of all the gods, and go with dignity and quiet down to Their galleons of gold, and sail away down the River of Silence, not ever to return.

Then shall the River overflow its banks, and a tide come setting in from the Silent Sea, till all the Worlds and the Skies are drowned in silence; while MANA-YOOD-SUSHAI in the Middle of All sits deep in thought. And the hound Time, when all the Worlds and cities are swept away whereon he used to raven, having no more to devour, shall suddenly die.

But there are some that hold — and this is the heresy of the Saigoths — that when the gods go down at the last into their galleons of gold Mung shall turn alone, and, setting his back against Trehagobol and wielding the Sword of Severing which is called Death, shall fight out his last fight with the hound Time, his empty scabbard Sleep clattering loose beside him.

There under Trehagobol they shall fight alone when all the gods are gone.

And the Saigoths say that for two days and nights the hound shall leer and snarl before the face of Mung-days and nights that shall be lit by neither sun nor moons, for these shall go dipping down the sky with all the Worlds as the galleons glide away, because the gods that made them are gods no more.

And then shall the hound, springing, tear out the throat of Mung, who, making for the last time the sign of Mung, shall bring down Death crashing through the shoulders of the hound, and in the blood of Time that Sword shall rust away.

Then shall MANA-YOOD-SUSHAI be all alone, with neither Death nor Time, and never the hours singing in his ears, nor the swish of the passing

lives.

But far away from Pegana shall go the galleons of gold that bear the gods away, upon whose faces shall be utter calm, because They are the gods knowing that it is THE END.

TIME AND THE GODS



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PREFACE

These tales are of the things that befell gods and men in Yarnith, Averon, and Zarkandhu, and in the other countries of my dreams.

PART I.

TIME AND THE GODS

Once when the gods were young and only Their swarthy servant Time was without age, the gods lay sleeping by a broad river upon earth. There in a valley that from all the earth the gods had set apart for Their repose the gods dreamed marble dreams. And with domes and pinnacles the dreams arose and stood up proudly between the river and the sky, all shimmering white to the morning. In the city's midst the gleaming marble of a thousand steps climbed to the citadel where arose four pinnacles beckoning to heaven, and midmost between the pinnacles there stood the dome, vast, as the gods had dreamed it. All around, terrace by terrace, there went marble lawns well guarded by onyx lions and carved with effigies of all the gods striding amid the symbols of the worlds. With a sound like tinkling bells, far off in a land of shepherds hidden by some hill, the waters of many fountains turned again home. Then the gods awoke and there stood Sardathrion. Not to common men have the gods given to walk Sardathrion's streets, and not to common eyes to see her fountains. Only to those to whom in lonely passes in the night the gods have spoken, leaning through the stars, to those that have heard the voices of the gods above the morning or seen Their faces bending above the sea, only to those hath it been given to see Sardathrion, to stand where her pinnacles gathered together in the night fresh from the dreams of gods. For round the valley a great desert lies through which no common traveller may come, but those whom the gods have chosen feel suddenly a great longing at heart, and crossing the mountains that divide the desert from the world, set out across it driven by the gods, till hidden in the desert's midst they find the valley at last and look with eyes upon Sardathrion.

In the desert beyond the valley grow a myriad thorns, and all pointing towards Sardathrion. So may many that the gods have loved come to the marble city, but none can return, for other cities are no fitting home for men whose feet have touched Sardathrion's marble streets, where even the gods have not been ashamed to come in the guise of men with Their cloaks wrapped about their faces. Therefore no city shall ever hear the songs that are sung in the marble citadel by those in whose ears have rung the voices of the gods. No report shall ever come to other lands of the music of the fall of Sardathrion's fountains, when the waters which went heavenward return again into the lake where the gods cool Their brows sometimes in the guise

of men. None may ever hear the speech of the poets of that city, to whom the gods have spoken.

It stands a city aloof. There hath been no rumour of it — I alone have dreamed of it, and I may not be sure that my dreams are true.

* * * * *

Above the Twilight the gods were seated in the after years, ruling the worlds. No longer now They walked at evening in the Marble City hearing the fountains splash, or listening to the singing of the men they loved, because it was in the after years and the work of the gods was to be done.

But often as they rested a moment from doing the work of the gods, from hearing the prayers of men or sending here the Pestilence or there Mercy, They would speak awhile with one another of the olden years saying, "Rememberest thou not Sardathrion?" and another would answer "Ah! Sardathrion, and all Sardathrion's mist-draped marble lawns whereon we walk not now."

Then the gods turned to do the work of the gods, answering the prayers of men or smiting them, and ever They sent Their swarthy servant Time to heal or overwhelm. And Time went forth into the worlds to obey the commands of the gods, yet he cast furtive glances at his masters, and the gods distrusted Time because he had known the worlds or ever the gods became.

One day when furtive Time had gone into the worlds to nimbly smite some city whereof the gods were weary, the gods above the twilight speaking to one another said:

"Surely we are the lords of Time and gods of the worlds besides. See how our city Sardathrion lifts over other cities. Others arise and perish but Sardathrion standeth yet, the first and the last of cities. Rivers are lost in the sea and streams forsake the hills, but ever Sardathrion's fountains arise in our dream city. As was Sardathrion when the gods were young, so are her streets to-day as a sign that we are the gods."

Suddenly the swart figure of Time stood up before the gods, with both hands dripping with blood and a red sword dangling idly from his fingers, and said:

"Sardathrion is gone! I have overthrown it!"

And the gods said:

“Sardathrion? Sardathrion, the marble city? Thou, thou hast overthrown it? Thou, the slave of the gods?”

And the oldest of the gods said:

“Sardathrion, Sardathrion, and is Sardathrion gone?”

And furtively Time looked him in the face and edged towards him fingering with his dripping fingers the hilt of his nimble sword.

Then the gods feared with a new fear that he that had overthrown Their city would one day slay the gods. And a new cry went wailing through the Twilight, the lament of the gods for Their dream city, crying:

“Tears may not bring again Sardathrion.

“But this the gods may do who have seen, and seen with unrelenting eyes, the sorrows of ten thousand worlds — thy gods may weep for thee.

“Tears may not bring again Sardathrion.

“Believe it not, Sardathrion, that ever thy gods sent this doom to thee; he that hath overthrown thee shall overthrow thy gods.

“How oft when Night came suddenly on Morning playing in the fields of
Twilight did we watch thy pinnacles emerging from the darkness,
Sardathrion, Sardathrion, dream city of the gods, and thine onyx lions
looming limb by limb from the dusk.

“How often have we sent our child the Dawn to play with thy fountain tops; how often hath Evening, loveliest of our goddesses, strayed long upon thy balconies.

“Let one fragment of thy marbles stand up above the dust for thine old gods to caress, as a man when all else is lost treasures one lock of the hair of his beloved.

“Sardathrion, the gods must kiss once more the place where thy streets were once.

“There were wonderful marbles in thy streets, Sardathrion.”

“Sardathrion, Sardathrion, the gods weep for thee.”

THE COMING OF THE SEA

Once there was no sea, and the gods went walking over the green plains of earth.

Upon an evening of the forgotten years the gods were seated on the hills, and all the little rivers of the world lay coiled at Their feet asleep, when Slid, the new god, striding through the stars, came suddenly upon earth lying in a corner of space. And behind Slid there marched a million waves, all following Slid and tramping up the twilight; and Slid touched Earth in one of her great green valleys that divide the south, and here he encamped for the night with all his waves about him. But to the gods as They sat upon Their hilltops a new cry came crying over the green spaces that lay below the hills, and the gods said:

"This is neither the cry of life nor yet the whisper of death. What is this new cry that the gods have never commanded, yet which comes to the ears of the gods?"

And the gods together shouting made the cry of the south, calling the south wind to them. And again the gods shouted all together making the cry of the north, calling the north wind to Them; and thus They gathered to Them all Their winds and sent these four down into the low plains to find what thing it was that called with the new cry, and to drive it away from the gods.

Then all the winds harnessed up their clouds and drave forth till they came to the great green valley that divides the south in twain, and there found Slid with all his waves about him. Then for a space Slid and the four winds struggled with one another till the strength of the winds was gone, and they limped back to the gods, their masters, and said:

"We have met this new thing that has come upon the earth and have striven against its armies, but could not drive them forth; and the new thing is beautiful but very angry, and is creeping towards the gods."

But Slid advanced and led his armies up the valley, and inch by inch and mile by mile he conquered the lands of the gods. Then from Their hills the gods sent down a great array of cliffs against hard, red rocks, and bade them march against Slid. And the cliffs marched down till they came and stood before Slid and leaned their heads forward and frowned and stood staunch to guard the lands of the gods against the might of the sea, shutting Slid off

from the world. Then Slid sent some of his smaller waves to search out what stood against him, and the cliffs shattered them. But Slid went back and gathered together a hoard of his greatest waves and hurled them against the cliffs, and the cliffs shattered them. And again Slid called up out of his deep a mighty array of waves and sent them roaring against the guardians of the gods, and the red rocks frowned and smote them. And once again Slid gathered his greater waves and hurled them against the cliffs; and when the waves were scattered like those before them the feet of the cliffs were no longer standing firm, and their faces were scarred and battered. Then into every cleft that stood in the rocks Slid sent his hugest wave and others followed behind it, and Slid himself seized hold of huge rocks with his claws and tore them down and stamped them under his feet. And when the tumult was over the sea had won, and over the broken remnants of those red cliffs the armies of Slid marched on and up the long green valley.

Then the gods heard Slid exulting far away and singing songs of triumph over Their battered cliffs, and ever the tramp of his armies sounded nearer and nearer in the listening ears of the gods.

Then the gods called to Their downlands to save Their world from Slid, and the downlands gathered themselves and marched away, a great white line of gleaming cliffs, and halted before Slid. Then Slid advanced no more and lulled his legions, and while his waves were low he softly crooned a song such as once long ago had troubled the stars and brought down tears out of the twilight.

Sternly the white cliffs stood on guard to save the world of the gods, but the song that once had troubled the stars went moaning on awaking pent desires, till full at the feet of the gods the melody fell. Then the blue rivers that lay curled asleep opened their gleaming eyes, uncurled themselves and shook their rushes, and, making a stir among the hills, crept down to find the sea. And passing across the world they came at last to where the white cliffs stood, and, coming behind them, split them here and there and went through their broken ranks to Slid at last. And the gods were angry with Their traitorous streams.

Then Slid ceased from singing the song that lures the world, and gathered up his legions, and the rivers lifted up their heads with the waves, and all went marching on to assail the cliffs of the gods. And wherever the rivers had broken the ranks of the cliffs, Slid's armies went surging in and

broke them up into islands and shattered the islands away. And the gods on Their hill-tops heard once more the voice of Slid exulting over Their cliffs.

Already more than half the world lay subject to Slid, and still his armies advanced; and the people of Slid, the fishes and the long eels, went in and out of arbours that once were dear to the gods. Then the gods feared for Their dominion, and to the innermost sacred recesses of the mountains, to the very heart of the hills, the gods trooped off together and there found Tintaggon, a mountain of black marble, staring far over the earth, and spake thus to him with the voices of the gods:

"O eldest born of our mountains, when first we devised the earth we made thee, and thereafter fashioned fields and hollows, valleys and other hills, to lie about thy feet. And now, Tintaggon, thine ancient lords, the gods, are facing a new thing which overthrows the old. Go therefore, thou, Tintaggon, and stand up against Slid, that the gods be still the gods and the earth still green."

And hearing the voices of his sires, the elder gods, Tintaggon strode down through the evening, leaving a wake of twilight broad behind him as he strode: and going across the green earth came down to Ambrady at the valley's edge, and there met the foremost of Slid's fierce armies conquering the world.

And against him Slid hurled the force of a whole bay, which lashed itself high over Tintaggon's knees and streamed around his flanks and then fell and was lost. Tintaggon still stood firm for the honour and dominion of his lords, the elder gods. Then Slid went to Tintaggon and said: "Let us now make a truce. Stand thou back from Ambrady and let me pass through thy ranks that mine armies may now pass up the valley which opens on the world, that the green earth that dreams around the feet of older gods shall know the new god Slid. Then shall mine armies strive with thee no more, and thou and I shall be the equal lords of the whole earth when all the world is singing the chaunt of Slid, and thy head alone shall be lifted above mine armies when rival hills are dead. And I will deck thee with all the robes of the sea, and all the plunder that I have taken in rare cities shall be piled before thy feet. Tintaggon, I have conquered all the stars, my song swells through all the space besides, I come victorious from Mahn and Khanagat on the furthest edge of the worlds, and thou and I are to be equal lords when the old gods are gone and the green earth knoweth Slid. Behold me gleaming azure and fair with a thousand smiles, and swayed by a thousand

moods." And Tintaggon answered: "I am staunch and black and have one mood, and this — to defend my masters and their green earth."

Then Slid went backward growling and summoned together the waves of a whole sea and sent them singing full in Tintaggon's face. Then from Tintaggon's marble front the sea fell backwards crying on to a broken shore, and ripple by ripple straggled back to Slid saying: "Tintaggon stands."

Far out beyond the battered shore that lay at Tintaggon's feet Slid rested long and sent the nautilus to drift up and down before Tintaggon's eyes, and he and his armies sat singing idle songs of dreamy islands far away to the south, and of the still stars whence they had stolen forth, of twilight evenings and of long ago. Still Tintaggon stood with his feet planted fair upon the valley's edge defending the gods and Their green earth against the sea.

And all the while that Slid sang his songs and played with the nautilus that sailed up and down he gathered his oceans together. One morning as Slid sang of old outrageous wars and of most enchanting peace and of dreamy islands and the south wind and the sun, he suddenly launched five oceans out of the deep all to attack Tintaggon. And the five oceans sprang upon Tintaggon and passed above his head. One by one the grip of the oceans loosened, one by one they fell back into the deep and still Tintaggon stood, and on that morning the might of all five oceans lay dead at Tintaggon's feet. That which Slid had conquered he still held, and there is now no longer a great green valley in the south, but all that Tintaggon had guarded against Slid he gave back to the gods. Very calm the sea lies now about Tintaggon's feet, where he stands all black amid crumbled cliffs of white, with red rocks piled about his feet. And often the sea retreats far out along the shore, and often wave by wave comes marching in with the sound of the tramping of armies, that all may still remember the great fight that surged about Tintaggon once, when he guarded the gods and the green earth against Slid.

Sometimes in their dreams the war-scarred warriors of Slid still lift their heads and cry their battle cry; then do dark clouds gather about Tintaggon's swarthy brow and he stands out menacing, seen afar by ships, where once he conquered Slid. And the gods know well that while Tintaggon stands They and Their world are safe; and whether Slid shall one day smite Tintaggon is hidden among the secrets of the sea.

A LEGEND OF THE DAWN

When the worlds and All began the gods were stern and old and They saw the Beginning from under eyebrows hoar with years, all but Inzana, Their child, who played with the golden ball. Inzana was the child of all the gods. And the law before the Beginning and thereafter was that all should obey the gods, yet hither and thither went all Pegana's gods to obey the Dawnchild because she loved to be obeyed.

It was dark all over the world and even in Pegana, where dwell the gods, it was dark when the child Inzana, the Dawn, first found her golden ball. Then running down the stairway of the gods with tripping feet, chalcedony, onyx, chalcedony, onyx, step by step, she cast her golden ball across the sky. The golden ball went bounding up the sky, and the Dawnchild with her flaring hair stood laughing upon the stairway of the gods, and it was day. So gleaming fields below saw the first of all the days that the gods have destined. But towards evening certain mountains, afar and aloof, conspired together to stand between the world and the golden ball and to wrap their crags about it and to shut it from the world, and all the world was darkened with their plot. And the Dawnchild up in Pegana cried for her golden ball. Then all the gods came down the stairway right to Pegana's gate to see what ailed the Dawnchild and to ask her why she cried. Then Inzana said that her golden ball had been taken away and hidden by mountains black and ugly, far away from Pegana, all in a world of rocks under the rim of the sky, and she wanted her golden ball and could not love the dark.

Thereat Umborodom, whose hound was the thunder, took his hound in leash, and strode away across the sky after the golden ball until he came to the mountains afar and aloof. There did the thunder put his nose to the rocks and bay along the valleys, and fast at his heels followed Umborodom. And the nearer the hound, the thunder, came to the golden ball the louder did he bay, but haughty and silent stood the mountains whose plot had darkened the world. All in the dark among the crags in a mighty cavern, guarded by two twin peaks, at last they found the golden ball for which the Dawnchild wept. Then under the world went Umborodom with his thunder panting behind him, and came in the dark before the morning from underneath the world and gave the Dawnchild back her golden ball. And Inzana laughed

and took it in her hands, and Umborodom went back into Pegana, and at its threshold the thunder went to sleep.

Again the Dawnchild tossed the golden ball far up into the blue across the sky, and the second morning shone upon the world, on lakes and oceans, and on drops of dew. But as the ball went bounding on its way, the prowling mists and the rain conspired together and took it and wrapped it in their tattered cloaks and carried it away. And through the rents in their garments gleamed the golden ball, but they held it fast and carried it right away and underneath the world. Then on an onyx step Inzana sat down and wept, who could no more be happy without her golden ball. And again the gods were sorry, and the South Wind came to tell her tales of most enchanted islands, to whom she listened not, nor yet to the tales of temples in lone lands that the East Wind told her, who had stood beside her when she flung her golden ball. But from far away the West Wind came with news of three grey travellers wrapt round with battered cloaks that carried away between them a golden ball.

Then up leapt the North Wind, he who guards the pole, and drew his sword of ice out of his scabbard of snow and sped away along the road that leads across the blue. And in the darkness underneath the world he met the three grey travellers and rushed upon them and drove them far before him, smiting them with his sword till their grey cloaks streamed with blood. And out of the midst of them, as they fled with flapping cloaks all red and grey and tattered, he leapt up with the golden ball and gave it to the Dawnchild.

Again Inzana tossed the ball into the sky, making the third day, and up and up it went and fell towards the fields, and as Inzana stooped to pick it up she suddenly heard the singing of all the birds that were. All the birds in the world were singing all together and also all the streams, and Inzana sat and listened and thought of no golden ball, nor ever of chalcedony and onyx, nor of all her fathers the gods, but only of all the birds. Then in the woods and meadows where they had all suddenly sung, they suddenly ceased. And Inzana, looking up, found that her ball was lost, and all alone in the stillness one owl laughed. When the gods heard Inzana crying for her ball They clustered together on the threshold and peered into the dark, but saw no golden ball. And leaning forward They cried out to the bat as he passed up and down: “Bat that seest all things, where is the golden ball?”

And though the bat answered none heard. And none of the winds had seen it nor any of the birds, and there were only the eyes of the gods in the

darkness peering for the golden ball. Then said the gods: “Thou hast lost thy golden ball,” and They made her a moon of silver to roll about the sky. And the child cried and threw it upon the stairway and chipped and broke its edges and asked for the golden ball. And Limpang Tung, the Lord of Music, who was least of all the gods, because the child cried still for her golden ball, stole out of Pegana and crept across the sky, and found the birds of all the world sitting in trees and ivy, and whispering in the dark. He asked them one by one for news of the golden ball. Some had last seen it on a neighbouring hill and others in trees, though none knew where it was. A heron had seen it lying in a pond, but a wild duck in some reeds had seen it last as she came home across the hills, and then it was rolling very far away.

At last the cock cried out that he had seen it lying beneath the world. There Limpang Tung sought it and the cock called to him through the darkness as he went, until at last he found the golden ball. Then Limpang Tung went up into Pegana and gave it to the Dawnchild, who played with the moon no more. And the cock and all his tribe cried out: “We found it. We found the golden ball.”

Again Inzana tossed the ball afar, laughing with joy to see it, her hands stretched upwards, her golden hair afloat, and carefully she watched it as it fell. But alas! it fell with a splash into the great sea and gleamed and shimmered as it fell till the waters became dark above it and could be seen no more. And men on the world said: “How the dew has fallen, and how the mists set in with breezes from the streams.”

But the dew was the tears of the Dawnchild, and the mists were her sighs when she said: “There will no more come a time when I play with my ball again, for now it is lost for ever.”

And the gods tried to comfort Inzana as she played with her silver moon, but she would not hear Them, and went in tears to Slid, where he played with gleaming sails, and in his mighty treasury turned over gems and pearls and lorded it over the sea. And she said: “O Slid, whose soul is in the sea, bring back my golden ball.”

And Slid stood up, swarthy, and clad in seaweed, and mightily dived from the last chalcedony step out of Pegana’s threshold straight into ocean. There on the sand, among the battered navies of the nautilus and broken weapons of the swordfish, hidden by dark water, he found the golden ball. And coming up in the night, all green and dripping, he carried it gleaming to the stairway of the gods and brought it back to Inzana from the sea; and

out of the hands of Slid she took it and tossed it far and wide over his sails and sea, and far away it shone on lands that knew not Slid, till it came to its zenith and dropped towards the world.

But ere it fell the Eclipse dashed out from his hiding, and rushed at the golden ball and seized it in his jaws. When Inzana saw the Eclipse bearing her plaything away she cried aloud to the thunder, who burst from Pegana and fell howling upon the throat of the Eclipse, who dropped the golden ball and let it fall towards earth. But the black mountains disguised themselves with snow, and as the golden ball fell down towards them they turned their peaks to ruby crimson and their lakes to sapphires gleaming amongst silver, and Inzana saw a jewelled casket into which her plaything fell. But when she stooped to pick it up again she found no jewelled casket with rubies, silver or sapphires, but only wicked mountains disguised in snow that had trapped her golden ball. And then she cried because there was none to find it, for the thunder was far away chasing the Eclipse, and all the gods lamented when They saw her sorrow. And Limpang Tung, who was least of all the gods, was yet the saddest at the Dawnchild's grief, and when the gods said: "Play with your silver moon," he stepped lightly from the rest, and coming down the stairway of the gods, playing an instrument of music, went out towards the world to find the golden ball because Inzana wept.

And into the world he went till he came to the nether cliffs that stand by the inner mountains in the soul and heart of the earth where the Earthquake dwelleth alone, asleep but astir as he sleeps, breathing and moving his legs, and grunting aloud in the dark. Then in the ear of the Earthquake Limpang Tung said a word that only the gods may say, and the Earthquake started to his feet and flung the cave away, the cave wherein he slept between the cliffs, and shook himself and went galloping abroad and overturned the mountains that hid the golden ball, and bit the earth beneath them and hurled their crags about and covered himself with rocks and fallen hills, and went back ravening and growling into the soul of the earth, and there lay down and slept again for a hundred years. And the golden ball rolled free, passing under the shattered earth, and so rolled back to Pegana; and Limpang Tung came home to the onyx step and took the Dawnchild by the hand and told not what he had done but said it was the Earthquake, and went away to sit at the feet of the gods. But Inzana went and patted the Earthquake on the head, for she said it was dark and lonely in the soul of the earth. Thereafter, returning step by step, chalcedony, onyx, chalcedony,

onyx, up the stairway of the gods, she cast again her golden ball from the Threshold afar into the blue to gladden the world and the sky, and laughed to see it go.

And far away Trogool upon the utter Rim turned a page that was numbered six in a cipher that none might read. And as the golden ball went through the sky to gleam on lands and cities, there came the Fog towards it, stooping as he walked with his dark brown cloak about him, and behind him slunk the Night. And as the golden ball rolled past the Fog suddenly Night snarled and sprang upon it and carried it away. Hastily Inzana gathered the gods and said: "The Night hath seized my golden ball and no god alone can find it now, for none can say how far the Night may roam, who prowls all round us and out beyond the worlds."

At the entreaty of Their Dawnchild all the gods made Themselves stars for torches, and far away through all the sky followed the tracks of Night as far as he prowled abroad. And at one time Slid, with the Pleiades in his hand, came nigh to the golden ball, and at another Yoharneth-Lahai, holding Orion for a torch, but lastly Limpang Tung, bearing the morning star, found the golden ball far away under the world near to the lair of Night.

And all the gods together seized the ball, and Night turning smote out the torches of the gods and thereafter slunk away; and all the gods in triumph marched up the gleaming stairway of the gods, all praising little Limpang Tung, who through the chase had followed Night so close in search of the golden ball. Then far below on the world a human child cried out to the Dawnchild for the golden ball, and Inzana ceased from her play that illumined world and sky, and cast the ball from the Threshold of the gods to the little human child that played in the fields below, and would one day die. And the child played all day long with the golden ball down in the little fields where the humans lived, and went to bed at evening and put it beneath his pillow, and went to sleep, and no one worked in all the world because the child was playing. And the light of the golden ball streamed up from under the pillow and out through the half shut door and shone in the western sky, and Yoharneth-Lahai in the night time tip-toed into the room, and took the ball gently (for he was a god) away from under the pillow and brought it back to the Dawnchild to gleam on an onyx step.

But some day Night shall seize the golden ball and carry it right away and drag it down to his lair, and Slid shall dive from the Threshold into the sea to see if it be there, and coming up when the fishermen draw their nets

shall find it not, nor yet discover it among the sails. Limpang Tung shall seek among the birds and shall not find it when the cock is mute, and up the valleys shall go Umborodom to seek among the crags. And the hound, the thunder, shall chase the Eclipse and all the gods go seeking with Their stars, but never find the ball. And men, no longer having light of the golden ball, shall pray to the gods no more, who, having no worship, shall be no more the gods.

These things be hidden even from the gods.

THE VENGEANCE OF MEN

Ere the Beginning the gods divided earth into waste and pasture. Pleasant pastures They made to be green over the face of earth, orchards They made in valleys and heather upon hills, but Harza They doomed, predestined and foreordained to be a waste for ever.

When the world prayed at evening to the gods and the gods answered prayers They forgot the prayers of all the Tribes of Arim. Therefore the men of Arim were assailed with wars and driven from land to land and yet would not be crushed. And the men of Arim made them gods for themselves, appointing men as gods until the gods of Pegana should remember them again. And their leaders, Yoth and Haneth, played the part of gods and led their people on though every tribe assailed them. At last they came to Harza, where no tribes were, and at last had rest from war, and Yoth and Haneth said: "The work is done, and surely now Pegana's gods will remember." And they built a city in Harza and tilled the soil, and the green came over the waste as the wind comes over the sea, and there were fruit and cattle in Harza and the sounds of a million sheep. There they rested from their flight from all the tribes, and builded fables out of all their sorrows till all men smiled in Harza and children laughed.

Then said the gods, "Earth is no place for laughter." Thereat They strode to Pegana's outer gate, to where the Pestilence lay curled asleep, and waking him up They pointed toward Harza, and the Pestilence leapt forward howling across the sky.

That night he came to the fields near Harza, and stalking through the grass sat down and glared at the lights, and licked his paws and glared at the lights again.

But the next night, unseen, through laughing crowds, the Pestilence crept into the city, and stealing into the houses one by one, peered into the people's eyes, looking even through their eyelids, so that when morning came men stared before them crying out that they saw the Pestilence whom others saw not, and thereafter died, because the green eyes of the Pestilence had looked into their souls. Chill and damp was he, yet there came heat from his eyes that parched the souls of men. Then came the physicians and the men learned in magic, and made the sign of the physicians and the sign of the men of magic and cast blue water upon herbs and chanted spells; but

still the Pestilence crept from house to house and still he looked into the souls of men. And the lives of the people streamed away from Harza, and whither they went is set in many books. But the Pestilence fed on the light that shines in the eyes of men, which never appeased his hunger; chiller and damper he grew, and the heat from his eyes increased when night by night he galloped through the city, going by stealth no more.

Then did men pray in Harza to the gods, saying:

"High gods! Show clemency to Harza."

And the gods listened to their prayers, but as They listened They pointed with their fingers and cheered the Pestilence on. And the Pestilence grew bolder at his masters' voices and thrust his face close up before the eyes of men.

He could be seen by none saving those he smote. At first he slept by day, lying in misty hollows, but as his hunger increased he sprang up even in sunlight and clung to the chests of men and looked down through their eyes into their souls that shrivelled, until almost he could be dimly seen even by those he smote not.

Adro, the physician, sat in his chamber with one light burning, making a mixing in a bowl that should drive the Pestilence away, when through his door there blew a draught that set the light a-flickering.

Then because the draught was cold the physician shivered and went and closed the door, but as he turned again he saw the Pestilence lapping at his mixing, who sprang and set one paw upon Adro's shoulder and another upon his cloak, while with two he clung to his waist, and looked him in the eyes.

Two men were walking in the street; one said to the other: "Upon the morrow I will sup with thee."

And the Pestilence grinned a grin that none beheld, baring his dripping teeth, and crept away to see whether upon the morrow those men should sup together.

A traveller coming in said: "This is Harza. Here will I rest."

But his life went further than Harza upon that day's journey.

All feared the Pestilence, and those that he smote beheld him, but none saw the great shapes of the gods by starlight as They urged Their Pestilence on.

Then all men fled from Harza, and the Pestilence chased dogs and rats and sprang upward at the bats as they sailed above him, who died and lay in

the streets. But soon he returned and pursued the men of Harza where they fled, and sat by rivers where they came to drink, away below the city. Then back to Harza went the people of Harza pursued by the Pestilence still, and gathered in the Temple of All the gods save One, and said to the High Prophet: “What may now be done?” who answered:

“All the gods have mocked at prayer. This sin must now be punished by the vengeance of men.”

And the people stood in awe.

The High Prophet went up to the Tower beneath the sky whereupon beat the eyes of all the gods by starlight. There in the sight of the gods he spake in the ear of the gods, saying: “High gods! Ye have made mock of men. Know therefore that it is writ in ancient lore and found by prophecy that there is an *End* that waiteth for the gods, who shall go down from Pegana in galleons of gold all down the Silent River and into the Silent Sea, and there Their galleons shall go up in mist and They shall be gods no more. And men shall gain harbour from the mocking of the gods at last in the warm moist earth, but to the gods shall no ceasing ever come from being the Things that were the gods. When Time and worlds and death are gone away nought shall then remain but worn regrets and Things that were once gods.

“In the sight of the gods.

“In the ear of the gods.”

Then the gods shouted all together and pointed with Their hands at the High Prophet’s throat, and the Pestilence sprang.

Long since the High Prophet is dead and his words are forgotten by men, but the gods know not yet whether it be true that *The End* is waiting for the gods, and him who might have told Them They have slain. And the gods of Pegana are fearing the fear that hath fallen upon the gods because of the vengeance of men, for They know not when *The End* shall be, or whether it shall come.

WHEN THE GODS SLEPT

All the gods were sitting in Pegana, and Their slave, Time, lay idle at Pegana's gate with nothing to destroy, when They thought of worlds, worlds large and round and gleaming, and little silver moons. Then (who knoweth when?), as the gods raised Their hands making the sign of the gods, the thoughts of the gods became worlds and silver moons. And the worlds swam by Pegana's gate to take their places in the sky, to ride at anchor for ever, each where the gods had bidden. And because they were round and big and gleamed all over the sky, the gods laughed and shouted and all clapped Their hands. Then upon earth the gods played out the game of the gods, the game of life and death, and on the other worlds They did a secret thing, playing a game that is hidden.

At last They mocked no more at life and laughed at death no more, and cried aloud in Pegana: "Will no new thing be? Must those four march for ever round the world till our eyes are wearied with the treading of the feet of the Seasons that will not cease, while Night and Day and Life and Death drearily rise and fall?"

And as a child stares at the bare walls of a narrow hut, so the gods looked all listlessly upon the worlds, saying:

"Will no new thing be?"

And in Their weariness the gods said: "Ah! to be young again. Ah! to be fresh once more from the brain of *Mana-Yood-Sushai*."

And They turned away Their eyes in weariness from all the gleaming worlds and laid Them down upon Pegana's floor, for They said:

"It may be that the worlds shall pass and we would fain forget them."

Then the gods slept. Then did the comet break loose from his moorings and the eclipse roamed about the sky, and down on the earth did Death's three children — Famine, Pestilence, and Drought — come out to feed. The eyes of the Famine were green, and the eyes of the Drought were red, but the Pestilence was blind and smote about all round him with his claws among the cities.

But as the gods slept, there came from beyond the Rim, out of the dark and unknown, three Yozis, spirits of ill, that sailed up the river of Silence in galleons with silver sails. Far away they had seen Yum and Gothum, the stars that stand sentinel over Pegana's gate, blinking and falling asleep, and

as they neared Pegana they found a hush wherein the gods slept heavily. Ya, Ha, and Snyrg were these three Yozis, the lords of evil, madness, and of spite. When they crept from their galleons and stole over Pegana's silent threshold it boded ill for the gods. There in Pegana lay the gods asleep, and in a corner lay the Power of the gods alone upon the floor, a thing wrought of black rock and four words graven upon it, whereof I might not give thee any clue, if even I should find it — four words of which none knoweth. Some say they tell of the opening of a flower towards dawn, and others say they concern earthquakes among hills, and others that they tell of the death of fishes, and others that the words be these: Power, Knowledge, Forgetting, and another word that not the gods themselves may ever guess. These words the Yozis read, and sped away in dread lest the gods should wake, and going aboard their galleons, bade the rowers haste. Thus the Yozis became gods, having the power of gods, and they sailed away to the earth, and came to a mountainous island in the sea. There they sat upon the rocks, sitting as the gods sit, with their right hands uplifted, and having the power of gods, only none came to worship. Thither came no ships nigh them, nor ever at evening came the prayers of men, nor smell of incense, nor screams from the sacrifice. Then said the Yozis:

"Of what avails it that we be gods if no one worship us nor give us sacrifice?"

And Ya, Ha, and Snyrg set sail in their silver galleons, and went looming down the sea to come to the shores of men. And first they came to an island where were fisher folk; and the folk of the island, running down to the shore cried out to them:

"Who be ye?"

And the Yozis answered:

"We be three gods, and we would have your worship."

But the fisher folk answered:

"Here we worship Rahm, the Thunder, and have no worship nor sacrifice for other gods."

Then the Yozis snarled with anger and sailed away, and sailed till they came to another shore, sandy and low and forsaken. And at last they found an old man upon the shore, and they cried out to him:

"Old man upon the shore! We be three gods that it were well to worship, gods of great power and apt in the granting of prayer."

The old man answered:

“We worship Pegana’s gods, who have a fondness for our incense and the sound of our sacrifice when it squeals upon the altar.”

Then answered Snyrg:

“Asleep are Pegana’s gods, nor will They wake for the humming of thy prayers which lie in the dust upon Pegana’s floor, and over Them Sniracte, the spider of the worlds, hath woven a web of mist. And the squealing of the sacrifice maketh no music in ears that are closed in sleep.”

The old man answered, standing upon the shore:

“Though all the gods of old shall answer our prayers no longer, yet still to the gods of old shall all men pray here in Syrinais.”

But the Yozis turned their ships about and angrily sailed away, all cursing Syrinais and Syrinais’s gods, but most especially the old man that stood upon the shore.

Still the three Yozis lusted for the worship of men, and came, on the third night of their sailing, to a city’s lights; and nearing the shore they found it a city of song wherein all folks rejoiced. Then sat each Yozi on his galleon’s prow, and leered with his eyes upon the city, so that the music stopped and the dancing ceased, and all looked out to sea at the strange shapes of the Yozis beneath their silver sails. Then Snyrg demanded their worship, promising increase of joys, and swearing by the light of his eyes that he would send little flames to leap over the grass, to pursue the enemies of that city and to chase them about the world.

But the people answered that in that city men worshipped Agrodaun, the mountain standing alone, and might not worship other gods even though they came in galleons with silver sails, sailing from over the sea. But Snyrg answered:

“Certainly Agrodaun is only a mountain, and in no manner a god.”

But the priests of Agrodaun sang answer from the shore:

“If the sacrifice of men make not Agrodaun a god, nor blood still young on his rocks, nor the little fluttering prayers of ten thousand hearts, nor two thousands years of worship and all the hopes of the people and the whole strength of our race, then are there no gods and ye be common sailors, sailing from over the sea.”

Then said the Yozis:

“Hath Agrodaun answered prayer?” And the people heard the words that the Yozis said.

Then went the priests of Agrodaun away from the shore and up the steep streets of the city, the people following, and over the moor beyond it to the foot of Agrodaun, and then said:

"Agrodaun, if thou art not our god, go back and herd with yonder common hills, and put a cap of snow upon thy head and crouch far off as they do beneath the sky; but if we have given thee divinity in two thousand years, if our hopes are all about thee like a cloak, then stand and look upon thy worshippers from over our city for ever." And the smoke that ascended from his feet stood still and there fell a hush over great Agrodaun; and the priests went back to the sea and said to the three Yozis:

"New gods shall have our worship when Agrodaun grows weary of being our god, or when in some night-time he shall stride away, leaving us nought to gaze at that is higher than our city."

And the Yozis sailed away and cursed towards Agrodaun, but could not hurt him, for he was but a mountain.

And the Yozis sailed along the coast till they came to a river running to the sea, and they sailed up the river till they came to a people at work, who furrowed the soil and sowed, and strove against the forest. Then the Yozis called to the people as they worked in the fields:

"Give us your worship and ye shall have many joys."

But the people answered:

"We may not worship you."

Then answered Snyrg:

"Ye also, have ye a god?"

And the people answered:

"We worship the years to come, and we set the world in order for their coming, as one layeth raiment on the road before the advent of a King. And when those years shall come, they shall accept the worship of a race they knew not, and their people shall make their sacrifice to the years that follow them, who, in their turn, shall minister to the *End*."

Then answered Snyrg:

"Gods that shall recompense you not. Rather give us your prayers and have our pleasures, the pleasures that we shall give you, and when your gods shall come, let them be wroth — they cannot punish you."

But the people continued to sacrifice their labour to their gods, the years to come, making the world a place for gods to dwell in, and the Yozis cursed those gods and sailed away. And Ya, the Lord of malice, swore that

when those years should come, they should see whether it were well for them to have snatched away the worship from three Yozis.

And still the Yozis sailed, for they said:

"It were better to be birds and have no air to fly in, than to be gods having neither prayers nor worship."

But where sky met with ocean, the Yozis saw land again, and thither sailed; and there the Yozis saw men in strange old garments performing ancient rites in a land of many temples. And the Yozis called to the men as they performed their ancient rites and said:

"We be three gods well versed in the needs of men, to worship whom were to obtain instant joy."

But the men said:

"We have already gods."

And Snyrg replied:

"Ye, too?"

The men answered:

"For we worship the things that have been and all the years that were. Divinely have they helped us, therefore we give them worship that is their due."

And the Yozis answered the people:

"We be gods of the present and return good things for worship."

But the people answered, saying from the shore:

"Our gods have given us already the good things, and we return Them the worship that is Their due."

And the Yozis set their faces to landward, and cursed all things that had been and all the years that were, and sailed in their galleons away.

A rocky shore in an inhuman land stood up against the sea. Thither the Yozis came and found no man, but out of the dark from inland towards evening came a herd of great baboons and chattered greatly when they saw the ships.

Then spake Snyrg to them:

"Have ye, too, a god?"

And the baboons spat.

Then said the Yozis:

"We be seductive gods, having a particular remembrance for little prayers."

But the baboons leered fiercely at the Yozis and would have none of them for gods.

One said that prayers hindered the eating of nuts. But Snyrg leaned forward and whispered, and the baboons went down upon their knees and clasped their hands as men clasp, and chattered prayer and said to one another that these were the gods of old, and gave the Yozis their worship — for Snyrg had whispered in their ears that, if they would worship the Yozis, he would make them men. And the baboons arose from worshipping, smoother about the face and a little shorter in the arms, and went away and hid their bodies in clothing, and afterwards galloped away from the rocky shore and went and herded with men. And men could not discern what they were, for their bodies were bodies of men, though their souls were still the souls of beasts and their worship went to the Yozis, spirits of ill.

And the lords of malice, hatred and madness sailed back to their island in the sea and sat upon the shore as gods sit, with right hand uplifted; and at evening foul prayers from the baboons gathered about them and infested the rocks.

But in Pegana the gods awoke with a start.

THE KING THAT WAS NOT

The land of Runazar hath no King nor ever had one; and this is the law of the land of Runazar that, seeing that it hath never had a King, it shall not have one for ever. Therefore in Runazar the priests hold sway, who tell people that never in Runazar hath there been a King.

Althazar, King of Runazar, and lord of all lands near by, commanded for the closer knowledge of the gods that Their images should be carven in Runazar, and in all lands near by. And when Althazar's command, wafted abroad by trumpets, came tinkling in the ear of all the gods, right glad were They at the sound of it. Therefore men quarried marble from the earth, and sculptors busied themselves in Runazar to obey the edict of the King. But the gods stood by starlight on the hills where the sculptors might see Them, and draped the clouds about Them, and put upon Them Their divinest air, that sculptors might do justice to Pegana's gods. Then the gods strode back into Pegana and the sculptors hammered and wrought, and there came a day when the Master of Sculptors took audience of the King, saying:

"Althazar, King of Runazar, High Lord moreover of all the lands near by, to whom be the gods benignant, humbly have we completed the images of all such gods as were in thine edict named."

Then the King commanded a great space to be cleared among the houses in his city, and there the images of all the gods were borne and set before the King, and there were assembled the Master of Sculptors and all his men; and before each stood a soldier bearing a pile of gold upon a jewelled tray, and behind each stood a soldier with a drawn sword pointing against their necks, and the King looked upon the images. And lo! they stood as gods with the clouds all draped about them, making the sign of the gods, but their bodies were those of men, and lo! their faces were very like the King's, and their beards were as the King's beard. And the King said:

"These be indeed Pegana's gods."

And the soldiers that stood before the sculptors were caused to present to them the piles of gold, and the soldiers that stood behind the sculptors were caused to sheath their swords. And the people shouted:

"These be indeed Pegana's gods, whose faces we are permitted to see by the will of Althazar the King, to whom be the gods benignant." And heralds

were sent abroad through the cities of Runazar and of all the lands near by, proclaiming of the images:

"These be Pegana's gods."

But up in Pegana the gods howled with wrath and Mung leant forward to make the sign of Mung against Althazar the King. But the gods laid Their hands upon his shoulder saying:

"Slay him not, for it is not enough that Althazar shall die, who hath made the faces of the gods to be like the faces of men, but he must not even have ever been."

Then said the gods:

"Spake we of Althazar, a King?"

And the gods said:

"Nay, we spake not." And the gods said:

"Dreamed we of one Althazar?" And the gods said:

"Nay, we dreamed not."

But in the royal palace of Runazar, Althazar, passing suddenly out of the remembrance of the gods, became no longer a thing that was or had ever been.

And by the throne of Althazar lay a robe, and near it lay a crown, and the priests of the gods entered his palace and made it a temple of the gods. And the people coming to worship said:

"Whose was this robe and to what purpose is this crown?"

And the priests answered:

"The gods have cast away the fragment of a garment and lo! from the fingers of the gods hath slipped one little ring."

And the people said to the priests:

"Seeing that Runazar hath never had a King, therefore be ye our rulers, and make ye our laws in the sight of Pegana's gods."

THE CAVE OF KAI

The pomp of crowning was ended, the rejoicings had died away, and Khanazar, the new King, sat in the seat of the Kings of Averon to do his work upon the destinies of men. His uncle, Khanazar the Lone, had died, and he had come from a far castle to the south, with a great procession, to Ilaun, the citadel of Averon; and there they had crowned him King of Averon and of the mountains, and Lord, if there be aught beyond those mountains, of all such lands as are. But now the pomp of the crowning was gone away and Khanazar sat afar off from his home, a very mighty King.

Then the King grew weary of the destinies of Averon and weary of the making of commands. So Khanazar sent heralds through all cities saying:

"Hear! The will of the King! Hear! The will of the King of Averon and of the mountains and Lord, if there be aught beyond those mountains, of all such lands as are. Let there come together to Ilaun all such as have an art in secret matters. Hear!"

And there gathered together to Ilaun the wise men of all the degrees of magic, even to the seventh, who had made spells before Khanazar the Lone; and they came before the new King in his palace placing their hands upon his feet. Then said the King to the magicians:

"I have a need."

And they answered:

"The earth touches the feet of the King in token of submission."

But the King answered:

"My need is not of the earth; but I would find certain of the hours that have been, and sundry days that were."

And all the wise folks were silent, till there spake out mournfully the wisest of them all, who made spells in the seventh degree, saying:

"The days that were, and the hours, have winged their way to Mount Agdora's summit, and there, dipping, have passed away from sight, not ever to return, for haply they have not heard the King's command."

Of these wise folks are many things chronicled. Moreover, it is set in writing of the scribes how they had audience of King Khanazar and of the words they spake, but of their further deeds there is no legend. But it is told how the King sent men to run and pass through all the cities till they should find one that was wiser even than the magicians that had made spells before

Khanazar the Lone. Far up the mountains that limit Averon they found Syrahn, the prophet, among the goats, who was of none of the degrees of magic, and who had cast no spells before the former King. Him they brought to Khanazar, and the King said unto him:

"I have a need."

And Syrahn answered:

"Thou art a man."

And the King said:

"Where lie the days that were and certain hours?"

And Syrahn answered:

"These things lie in a cave afar from here, and over the cave stands sentinel one Kai, and this cave Kai hath guarded from the gods and men since ever the Beginning was made. It may be that he shall let Khanazar pass by."

Then the King gathered elephants and camels that carried burdens of gold, and trusty servants that carried precious gems, and gathered an army to go before him and an army to follow behind, and sent out horsemen to warn the dwellers of the plains that the King of Averon was afoot.

And he bade Syrahn to lead to that place where the days of old lie hid and all forgotten hours.

Across the plain and up Mount Agdora, and dipping beyond its summit went Khanazar the King, and his two armies who followed Syrahn. Eight times the purple tent with golden border had been pitched for the King of Averon, and eight times it had been struck ere the King and the King's armies came to a dark cave in a valley dark, where Kai stood guard over the days that were. And the face of Kai was as a warrior that vanquisheth cities and burdeneth himself not with captives, and his form was as the forms of gods, but his eyes were the eyes of beasts; before whom came the King of Averon with elephants and camels bearing burdens of gold, and trusty servants carrying precious gems.

Then said the King:

"Yonder behold my gifts. Give back to me my yesterday with its waving banners, my yesterday with its music and blue sky and all its cheering crowds that made me King, the yesterday that sailed with gleaming wings over my Averon."

And Kai answered, pointing to his cave:

“Thither, dishonoured and forgot, thy yesterday slunk away. And who amid the dusty heap of the forgotten days shall grovel to find thy yesterday?”

Then answered the King of Averon and of the mountains and Lord, if there be aught beyond them, of all such lands as are:

“I will go down on my knees in yon dark cave and search with my hands amid the dust, if so I may find my yesterday again and certain hours that are gone.”

And the King pointed to his piles of gold that stood where elephants were met together, and beyond them to the scornful camels. And Kai answered:

“The gods have offered me the gleaming worlds and all as far as the Rim, and whatever lies beyond it as far as the gods may see — and thou comest to me with elephants and camels.”

Then said the King:

“Across the orchards of my home there hath passed one hour whereof thou knowest well, and I pray to thee, who wilt take no gifts borne upon elephants or camels, to give me of thy mercy one second back, one grain of dust that clings to that hour in the heap that lies within thy cave.”

And, at the word mercy, Kai laughed. And the King turned his armies to the east. Therefore the armies returned to Averon and the heralds before them cried:

“Here cometh Khanazar, King of Averon and of the mountains and Lord, if there be aught beyond those mountains, of all such lands as are.”

And the King said to them:

“Say rather that here comes one greatly wearied who, having accomplished nought, returneth from a quest forlorn.”

So the King came again to Averon.

But it is told how there came into Ilaun one evening as the sun was setting a harper with a golden harp desiring audience of the King.

And it is told how men led him to Khanazar, who sat frowning alone upon his throne, to whom said the harper:

“I have a golden harp; and to its strings have clung like dust some seconds out of the forgotten hours and little happenings of the days that were.”

And Khanazar looked up and the harper touched the strings, and the old forgotten things were stirring again, and there arose a sound of songs that

had passed away and long since voices. Then when the harper saw that Khanazar looked not angrily upon him his fingers tramped over the chords as the gods tramp down the sky, and out of the golden harp arose a haze of memories; and the King leaning forward and staring before him saw in the haze no more his palace walls, but saw a valley with a stream that wandered through it, and woods upon either hill, and an old castle standing lonely to the south. And the harper, seeing a strange look upon the face of Khanazar, said:

"Is the King pleased who lords it over Averon and the mountains, and, if there be aught beyond them, over all such lands as are?"

And the King said: —

"Seeing that I am a child again in a valley to the south, how may I say what may be the will of the great King?"

When the stars shone high over Ilaun and still the King sat staring straight before him, all the courtiers drew away from the great palace, save one that stayed and kept one taper burning, and with them went the harper.

And when the dawn came up through silent archways into the marble palace, making the taper pale, the King still stared before him, and still he sat there when the stars shone again clearly and high above Ilaun.

But on the second morning the King arose and sent for the harper and said to him: —

"I am King again, and thou that hast a skill to stay the hours and mayest may bring again to men their forgotten days, thou shalt stand sentinel over my great to-morrow; and when I go forth to conquer Ziman-ho and make my armies mighty thou shalt stand between that morrow and the cave of Kai, and haply some deed of mine and the battling of my armies shall cling to thy golden harp and not go down dishonoured into the cave. For my to-morrow, who with such resounding stride goes trampling through my dreams, is far too kingly to herd with forgotten days in the dust of things that were. But on some future day, when Kings are dead and all their deeds forgotten, some harper of that time shall come and from those golden strings awake those deeds that echo in my dreams, till my to-morrow shall stride forth among the lesser days and tell the years that Khanazar was a King."

And answered the harper:

"I will stand sentinel over thy great to-morrow, and when thou goest forth to conquer Ziman-ho and make thine armies mighty I will stand

between thy morrow and the cave of Kai, till thy deeds and the battling of thine armies shall cling to my golden harp and not go down dishonoured into the cave. So that when Kings are dead and all their deeds forgotten the harpers of the future time shall awake from these golden chords those deeds of thine. This will I do."

Men of these days, that be skilled upon the harp, tell still of Khanazar, how that he was King of Averon and of the mountains, and claimed lordship of certain lands beyond, and how he went with armies against Ziman-ho and fought great battles, and in the last gained victory and was slain. But Kai, as he waited with his claws to gather in the last days of Khanazar that they might loom enormous in his cave, still found them not, and only gathered in some meaner deeds and the days and hours of lesser men, and was vexed by the shadow of a harper that stood between him and the world.

THE SORROW OF SEARCH

It is told also of King Khanazar how he bowed very low unto the gods of Old. None bowed so low unto the gods of Old as did King Khanazar.

One day the King returning from the worship of the gods of Old and from bowing before them in the temple of the gods commanded their prophets to appear before him, saying:

"I would know somewhat concerning the gods."

Then came the prophets before King Khanazar, burdened with many books, to whom the King said:

"It is not in books."

Thereat the prophets departed, bearing away with them a thousand methods well devised in books whereby men may gain wisdom of the gods. One alone remained, a master prophet, who had forgotten books, to whom the King said:

"The gods of Old are mighty."

And answered the master prophet:

"Very mighty are the gods of Old."

Then said the King:

"There are no gods but the gods of Old."

And answered the prophet:

"There are none other."

And they two being alone within the palace the King said:

"Tell me aught concerning gods or men if aught of the truth be known."

Then said the master prophet:

"Far and white and straight lieth the road to Knowing, and down it in the heat and dust go all wise people of the earth, but in the fields before they come to it the very wise lie down or pluck the flowers. By the side of the road to Knowing — O King, it is hard and hot — stand many temples, and in the doorway of every temple stand many priests, and they cry to the travellers that weary of the road, crying to them:

"This is the End."

And in the temples are the sounds of music, and from each roof arises the savour of pleasant burning; and all that look at a cool temple, whichever temple they look at, or hear the hidden music, turn in to see whether it be

indeed the End. And such as find that their temple is not indeed the End set forth again upon the dusty road, stopping at each temple as they pass for fear they miss the End, or striving onwards on the road, and see nothing in the dust, till they can walk no longer and are taken worn and weary of their journey into some other temple by a kindly priest who shall tell them that this also is the End. Neither on that road may a man gain any guiding from his fellows, for only one thing that they say is surely true, when they say:

"Friend, we can see nothing for the dust."

And of the dust that hides the way much has been there since ever that road began, and some is stirred up by the feet of all that travel upon it, and more arises from the temple doors.

And, O King, it were better for thee, travelling upon that road, to rest when thou hearest one calling: "This is the End," with the sounds of music behind him. And if in the dust and darkness thou pass by Lo and Mush and the pleasant temple of Kynash, or Sheenath with his opal smile, or Sho with his eyes of agate, yet Shilo and Mynarthitep, Gazo and Amurund and Slig are still before thee and the priests of their temples will not forget to call thee.

And, O King, it is told that only one discerned the end and passed by three thousand temples, and the priests of the last were like the priests of the first, and all said that their temple was at the end of the road, and the dark of the dust lay over them all, and all were very pleasant and only the road was weary. And in some were many gods, and in a few only one, and in some the shrine was empty, and all had many priests, and in all the travellers were happy as they rested. And into some his fellow travellers tried to force him, and when he said:

"I will travel further," many said:

"This man lies, for the road ends here."

And he that travelled to the End hath told that when the thunder was heard upon the road there arose the sound of the voices of all the priests as far as he could hear, crying:

"Hearken to Shilo"— "Hear Mush"— "Lo! Kynash"— "The voice of Sho"— "Mynarthitep is angry"— "Hear the word of Slig!"

And far away along the road one cried to the traveller that Sheenath stirred in his sleep.

O King this is very doleful. It is told that that traveller came at last to the utter End and there was a mighty gulf, and in the darkness at the bottom of the gulf one small god crept, no bigger than a hare, whose voice came crying in the cold:

"I know not."

And beyond the gulf was nought, only the small god crying.

And he that travelled to the End fled backwards for a great distance till he came to temples again, and entering one where a priest cried:

"This is the End," lay down and rested on a couch. There Yush sat silent, carved with an emerald tongue and two great eyes of sapphire, and there many rested and were happy. And an old priest, coming from comforting a child, came over to that traveller who had seen the End and said to him:

"This is Yush and this is the End of wisdom."

And the traveller answered:

"Yush is very peaceful and this indeed the End."

"O King, wouldst thou hear more?"

And the King said:

"I would hear all."

And the master prophet answered:

"There was also another prophet and his name was Shaun, who had such reverence for the gods of Old that he became able to discern their forms by starlight as they strode, unseen by others, among men. Each night did Shaun discern the forms of the gods and every day he taught concerning them, till men in Averon knew how the gods appeared all grey against the mountains, and how Rhoog was higher than Mount Scagadon, and how Skun was smaller, and how Asgool leaned forward as he strode, and how Trodath peered about him with small eyes. But one night as Shaun watched the gods of Old by starlight, he faintly discerned some other gods that sat far up the slopes of the mountains in the stillness behind the gods of Old. And the next day he hurled his robe away that he wore as Averon's prophet and said to his people:

"There be gods greater than the gods of Old, three gods seen faintly on the hills by starlight looking on Averon."

And Shaun set out and travelled many days and many people followed him. And every night he saw more clearly the shapes of the three new gods who sat silent when the gods of Old were striding among men. On the higher slopes of the mountain Shaun stopped with all his people, and there

they built a city and worshipped the gods, whom only Shaun could see, seated above them on the mountain. And Shaun taught how the gods were like grey streaks of light seen before dawn, and how the god on the right pointed upward toward the sky, and how the god on the left pointed downward toward the ground, but the god in the middle slept.

And in the city Shaun's followers built three temples. The one on the right was a temple for the young, and the one on the left a temple for the old, and the third was a temple for the old, and the third was a temple with doors closed and barred — therein none ever entered. One night as Shaun watched before the three gods sitting like pale light against the mountain, he saw on the mountain's summit two gods that spake together and pointed, mocking the gods of the hill, only he heard no sound. The next day Shaun set out and a few followed him to climb to the mountain's summit in the cold, to find the gods who were so great that they mocked at the silent three. And near the two gods they halted and built for themselves huts. Also they built a temple wherein the Two were carved by the hand of Shaun with their heads turned towards each other, with mockery on Their faces and Their fingers pointing, and beneath Them were carved the three gods of the hill as actors making sport. None remembered now Asgool, Trodath, Skun, and Rhoog, the gods of Old.

For many years Shaun and his few followers lived in their huts upon the mountain's summit worshipping gods that mocked, and every night Shaun saw the two gods by starlight as they laughed to one another in the silence. And Shaun grew old.

One night as his eyes were turned towards the Two, he saw across the mountains in the distance a great god seated in the plain and looming enormous to the sky, who looked with angry eyes towards the Two as they sat and mocked. Then said Shaun to his people, the few that had followed him thither:

"Alas that we may not rest, but beyond us in the plain sitteth the one true god and he is wroth with mocking. Let us therefore leave these two that sit and mock and let us find the truth in the worship of that greater god, who even though he kill shall yet not mock us."

But the people answered:

"Thou hast taken from us many gods and taught us now to worship gods that mock, and if there is laughter on their faces as we die, lo! thou alone canst see it, and we would rest."

But three men who had grown old with following followed still.

And down the steep mountain on the further side Shaun led them, saying:

"Now we shall surely know."

And the three old men answered:

"We shall know indeed, O last of all the prophets."

That night the two gods mocking at their worshippers mocked not at Shaun nor his three followers, who coming to the plain still travelled on till they came at last to a place where the eyes of Shaun at night could closely see the vast form of their god. And beyond them as far as the sky there lay a marsh. There they rested, building such shelters as they could, and said to one another:

"This is the End, for Shaun discerneth that there are no more gods, and before us lieth the marsh and old age hath come upon us."

And since they could not labour to build a temple, Shaun carved upon a rock all that he saw by starlight of the great god of the plain; so that if ever others forsook the gods of Old because they saw beyond them the Greater Three, and should thence come to knowledge of the Twain that mocked, and should yet persevere in wisdom till they saw by starlight him whom Shaun named the Ultimate god, they should still find there upon the rock what one had written concerning the end of search. For three years Shaun carved upon the rock, and rising one night from carving, saying:

"Now is my labour done," saw in the distance four greater gods beyond the Ultimate god. Proudly in the distance beyond the marsh these gods were tramping together, taking no heed of the god upon the plain. Then said Shaun to his three followers:

"Alas that we know not yet, for there be gods beyond the marsh."

None would follow Shaun, for they said that old age must end all quests, and that they would rather wait there in the plain for Death than that he should pursue them across the marsh.

Then Shaun said farewell to his followers, saying:

"You have followed me well since ever we forsook the gods of Old to worship greater gods. Farewell. It may be that your prayers at evening shall avail when you pray to the god of the plain, but I must go onward, for there be gods beyond."

So Shaun went down into the marsh, and for three days struggled through it, and on the third night saw the four gods not very far away, yet

could not discern Their faces. All the next day Shaun toiled on to see Their faces by starlight, but ere the night came up or one star shone, at set of sun, Shaun fell down before the feet of his four gods. The stars came out, and the faces of the four shone bright and clear, but Shaun saw them not, for the labour of toiling and seeing was over for Shaun; and lo! They were Asgool, Trodath, Skun, and Rhoog — The gods of Old.

Then said the King:

"It is well that the sorrow of search cometh only to the wise, for the wise are very few."

Also the King said:

"Tell me this thing, O prophet. Who are the true gods?"

The master prophet answered:

"Let the King command."

THE MEN OF YARNITH

The men of Yarnith hold that nothing began until Yarni Zai uplifted his hand. Yarni Zai, they say, has the form of a man but is greater and is a thing of rock. When he uplifted his hand all the rocks that wandered beneath the Dome, by which name they call the sky, gathered together around Yarni Zai.

Of the other worlds they say nought, but hold that the stars are the eyes of all the other gods that look on Yarni Zai and laugh, for they are all greater than he, though they have gathered no worlds around them.

Yet though they be greater than Yarni Zai, and though they laugh at him when they speak together beneath the Dome, they all speak of Yarni Zai.

Unheard is the speaking of the gods to all except the gods, but the men of Yarnith tell of how their prophet Iraun lying in the sand desert, Azrakhan, heard once their speaking and knew thereby how Yarni Zai departed from all the other gods to clothe himself with rocks and make a world.

Certain it is that every legend tells that at the end of the valley of Yodeth, where it becomes lost among black cliffs, there sits a figure colossal, against a mountain, whose form is the form of a man with the right hand uplifted, but vaster than the hills. And in the Book of Secret Things which the prophets keep in the Temple that stands in Yarnith is writ the story of the gathering of the world as Iraun heard it when the gods spake together, up in the stillness above Azrakhan.

And all that read this may learn how Yarni Zai drew the mountains about him like a cloak, and piled the world below him. It is not set in writing for how many years Yarni Zai sat clothed with rocks at the end of the Valley of Yodeth, while there was nought in all the world save rocks and Yarni Zai.

But one day there came another god running over the rocks across the world, and he ran as the clouds run upon days of storm, and as he sped towards Yodeth, Yarni Zai, sitting against his mountain with right hand uplifted, cried out:

“What dost thou, running across my world, and whither art thou going?”

And the new god answered never a word, but sped onwards, and as he went to left of him and to right of him there sprang up green things all over the rocks of the world of Yarni Zai.

So the new god ran round the world and made it green, saying in the valley where Yarni Zai sat monstrous against his mountain and certain lands

wherein Cradoa, the drought, browsed horribly at night.

Further, the writing in the book tells of how there came yet another god running speedily out of the east, as swiftly as the first, with his face set westward, and nought to stay his running; and how he stretched both arms outward beside him, and to left of him and to right of him as he ran the whole world whitened.

And Yarni Zai called out:

"What dost thou, running across my world?"

And the new god answered:

"I bring the snow for all the world — whiteness and resting and stillness."

And he stilled the running of streams and laid his hand even upon the head of Yarni Zai and muffled the noises of the world, till there was no sound in all lands, but the running of the new god that brought the snow as he sped across the plains.

But the two new gods chased each other for ever round the world, and every year they passed again, running down the valleys and up the hills and away across the plains before Yarni Zai, whose hand uplifted had gathered the world about him.

And, furthermore, the very devout may read how all the animals came up the valley of Yodeth to the mountain whereon rested Yarni Zai, saying:

"Give us leave to live, to be lions, rhinoceroses and rabbits, and to go about the world."

And Yarni Zai gave leave to the animals to be lions, rhinoceroses and rabbits, and all the other kinds of beasts, and to go about the world. But when they all had gone he gave leave to the bird to be a bird and to go about the sky.

And further there came a man into that valley who said:

"Yarni Zai, thou hast made animals into thy world. O Yarni Zai, ordain that there be men."

So Yarni Zai made men.

Then was there in the world Yarni Zai, and two strange gods that brought the greenness and the growing and the whiteness and the stillness, and animals and men.

And the god of the greenness pursued the god of the whiteness, and the god of the whiteness pursued the god of the greenness, and men pursued animals, and animals pursued men. But Yarni Zai sat still against his

mountain with his right hand uplifted. But the men of Yarnith say that when the arm of Yarni Zai shall cease to be uplifted the world shall be flung behind him, as a man's cloak is flung away. And Yarni Zai, no longer clad with the world, shall go back into the emptiness beneath the Dome among the stars, as a diver seeking pearls goes down from the islands.

It is writ in Yarnith's histories by scribes of old that there passed a year over the valley of Yarnith that bore not with it any rain; and the Famine from the wastes beyond, finding that it was dry and pleasant in Yarnith, crept over the mountains and down their slopes and sunned himself at the edge of Yarnith's fields.

And men of Yarnith, labouring in the fields, found the Famine as he nibbled at the corn and chased the cattle, and hastily they drew water from deep wells and cast it over the Famine's dry grey fur and drove him back to the mountains. But the next day when his fur was dry again the Famine returned and nibbled more of the corn and chased the cattle further, and again men drove him back. But again the Famine returned, and there came a time when there was no more water in the wells to frighten the Famine with, and he nibbled the corn till all of it was gone and the cattle that he chased grew very lean. And the Famine drew nearer, even to the houses of men and trampled on their gardens at night and ever came creeping nearer to their doors. At last the cattle were able to run no more, and one by one the Famine took them by their throats and dragged them down, and at night he scratched in the ground, killing even the roots of things, and came and peered in at the doorways and started back and peered in at the door again a little further, but yet was not bold enough to enter altogether, for fear that men should have water to throw over his dry grey fur.

Then did the men of Yarnith pray to Yarni Zai as he sat far off beyond the valley, praying to him night and day to call his Famine back, but the Famine sat and purred and slew all the cattle and dared at last to take men for his food.

And the histories tell how he slew children first and afterwards grew bolder and tore down women, till at last he even sprang at the throats of men as they laboured in the fields.

Then said the men of Yarnith:

"There must go one to take our prayers to the feet of Yarni Zai; for the world at evening utters many prayers, and it may be that Yarni Zai, as he hears all earth lamenting when the prayers at evening flutter to his feet, may

have missed among so many the prayers of the men of Yarnith. But if one go and say to Yarni Zai: ‘There is a little crease in the outer skirts of thy cloak that men call the valley of Yarnith, where the Famine is a greater lord than Yarni Zai,’ it may be that he shall remember for an instant and call his Famine back.”

Yet all men feared to go, seeing that they were but men and Yarni Zai was Lord of the whole earth, and the journey was far and rocky. But that night Hothrun Dath heard the Famine whining outside his house and pawing at his door; therefore, it seemed to him more meet to wither before the glance of Yarni Zai than that the whining of that Famine should ever again fall upon his ears.

So about the dawn, Hothrun Dath crept away, fearing still to hear behind him the breathing of the Famine, and set out upon his journey whither pointed the graves of men. For men in Yarnith are buried with their feet and faces turned toward Yarni Zai, lest he might beckon to them in their night and call them to him.

So all day long did Hothrun Dath follow the way of the graves. It is told that he even journeyed for three days and nights with nought but the graves to guide him, as they pointed towards Yarni Zai where all the world slopes upwards towards Yodeth, and the great black rocks that are nearest to Yarni Zai lie gathered together by clans, till he came to the two great black pillars of asdarinth and saw the rocks beyond them piled in a dark valley, narrow and aloof, and knew that this was Yodeth. Then did he haste no more, but walked quietly up the valley, daring not to disturb the stillness, for he said:

“Surely this is the stillness of Yarni Zai, which lay about him before he clothed himself with rocks.”

Here among the rocks which first had gathered to the call of Yarni Zai, Hothrun Dath felt a mighty fear, but yet went onwards because of all his people and because he knew that thrice in every hour in some dark chamber Death and Famine met to speak two words together, “The End.”

But as dawn turned the darkness into grey, he came to the valley’s end, and even touched the foot of Yarni Zai, but saw him not, for he was all hidden in the mist. Then Hothrun Dath feared that he might not behold him to look him in the eyes when he sent up his prayer. But laying his forehead against the foot of Yarni Zai he prayed for the men of Yarnith, saying:

“O Lord of Famine and Father of Death, there is a spot in the world that thou hast cast about thee which men call Yarnith, and there men die before

the time thou hast apportioned, passing out of Yarnith. Perchance the Famine hath rebelled against thee, or Death exceeds his powers. O Master of the World, drive out the Famine as a moth out of thy cloak, lest the gods beyond that regard thee with their eyes say — there is Yarni Zai, and lo! his cloak is tattered."

And in the mist no sign made Yarni Zai. Then did Hothrun Dath pray to Yarni Zai to make some sign with his uplifted hand that he might know he heard him. In the awe and silence he waited, until nigh the dawn the mist that hid the figure rolled upwards. Serene above the mountains he brooded over the world, silent, with right hand uplifted.

What Hothrun Dath saw there upon the face of Yarni Zai no history telleth, or how he came again alive to Yarnith, but this is writ that he fled, and none hath since beheld the face of Yarni Zai. Some say that he saw a look on the face of the image that set a horror tingling through his soul, but it is held in Yarnith that he found the marks of instruments of carving about the figure's feet, and discerning thereby that Yarni Zai was wrought by the hands of men, he fled down the valley screaming:

"There are no gods, and all the world is lost." And hope departed from him and all the purposes of life. Motionless behind him, lit by the rising sun, sat the colossal figure with right hand uplifted that man had made in his own image.

But the men of Yarnith tell how Hothrun Dath came back again panting to his own city, and told the people that there were no gods and that Yarnith had no hope from Yarni Zai. Then the men of Yarnith when they knew that the Famine came not from the gods, arose and strove against him. They dug deep for wells, and slew goats for food high up on Yarnith's mountains and went afar and gathered blades of grass, where yet it grew, that their cattle might live. Thus they fought the Famine, for they said: "If Yarni Zai be not a god, then is there nothing mightier in Yarnith than men, and who is the Famine that he should bare his teeth against the lords of Yarnith?"

And they said: "If no help cometh from Yarni Zai then is there no help but from our own strength and might, and we be Yarnith's gods with the saving of Yarnith burning within us or its doom according to our desire."

And some more the Famine slew, but others raised their hands saying: "These be the hands of gods," and drave the Famine back till he went from the houses of men and out among the cattle, and still the men of Yarnith pursued him, till above the heat of the fight came the million whispers of

rain heard faintly far off towards evening. Then the Famine fled away howling back to the mountains and over the mountains' crests, and became no more than a thing that is told in Yarnith's legends.

A thousand years have passed across the graves of those that fell in Yarnith by the Famine. But the men of Yarnith still pray to Yarni Zai, carved by men's hands in the likeness of a man, for they say— "It may be that the prayers we offer to Yarni Zai may roll upwards from his image as do the mists at dawn, and somewhere find at last the other gods or that God who sits behind the others of whom our prophets know not."

FOR THE HONOUR OF THE GODS

Of the great wars of the Three Islands are many histories writ and of how the heroes of the olden time one by one were slain, but nought is told of the days before the olden time, or ever the people of the isles went forth to war, when each in his own land tended cattle or sheep, and listless peace obscured those isles in the days before the olden time. For then the people of the Islands played like children about the feet of Chance and had no gods and went not forth to war. But sailors, cast by strange winds upon those shores which they named the Prosperous Isles, and finding a happy people which had no gods, told how they should be happier still and know the gods and fight for the honour of the gods and leave their names writ large in histories and at the last die proclaiming the names of the gods. And the people of the islands met and said:

"The beasts we know, but lo! these sailors tell of things beyond that know us as we know the beasts and use us for their pleasure as we use the beasts, but yet are apt to answer idle prayer flung up at evening near the hearth, when a man returneth from the ploughing of the fields. Shall we now seek these gods?" And some said:

"We are lords of the Three Islands and have none to trouble us, and while we live we find prosperity, and when we die our bones have ease in the quiet. Let us not therefore seek those who may loom greater than we do in the Islands Three or haply harry our bones when we be dead."

But others said:

"The prayers that a man mutters, when the drought hath come and all the cattle die, go up unheeded to the heedless clouds, and if somewhere there be those that garner prayer let us send men to seek them and to say: 'There be men in the Isles called Three, or sometimes named by sailors the Prosperous Isles (and they be in the Central Sea), who ofttimes pray, and it hath been told us that ye love the worship of men, and for it answer prayer, and we be travellers from the Islands Three.'"

And the people of the Islands were greatly allured by the thought of strange things neither men nor beasts who at evening answered prayer.

Therefore they sent men down in ships with sails to sail across the sea, and in safety over the sea to a far shore Chance brought the ships. Then over hill and valley three men set forth seeking to find the gods, and their

comrades beached the ships and waited on the shore. And they that sought the gods followed for thirty nights the lightnings in the sky over five mountains, and as they came to the summit of the last, they saw a valley beneath them, and lo! the gods. For there the gods sat, each on a marble hill, each sitting with an elbow on his knee, and his chin upon his hand, and all the gods were smiling about Their lips. And below them there were armies of little men, and about the feet of the gods they fought against each other and slew one another for the honour of the gods, and for the glory of the name of the gods. And round them in the valley their cities that they had builded with the toil of their hands, they burned for the honour of the gods, where they died for the honour of the gods, and the gods looked down and smiled. And up from the valley fluttered the prayers of men and here and there the gods did answer a prayer, but oftentimes They mocked them, and all the while men died.

And they that had sought the gods from the Islands Three, having seen what they had seen, lay down on the mountain summit lest the gods should see them. Then they crept backward a little space, still lying down, and whispered together and then stooped low and ran, and travelled across the mountains in twenty days and came again to their comrades by the shore. But their comrades asked them if their quest had failed and the three men only answered:

"We have seen the gods."

And setting sail the ships hove back across the Central Sea and came again to the Islands Three, where rest the feet of Chance, and said to the people:

"We have seen the gods."

But to the rulers of the Islands they told how the gods drove men in herds; and went back and tended their flocks again all in the Prosperous Isles, and were kinder to their cattle after they had seen how that the gods used men.

But the gods walking large about Their valley, and peering over the great mountain's rim, saw one morning the tracks of the three men. Then the gods bent their faces low over the tracks and leaning forward ran, and came before the evening of the day to the shore where the men had set sail in ships, and saw the tracks of ships upon the sand, and waded far out into the sea, and yet saw nought. Still it had been well for the Islands Three had not certain men that had heard the travellers' tale sought also to see the gods

themselves. These in the night-time slipped away from the Isles in ships, and ere the gods had retreated to the hills, They saw where ocean meets with sky the full white sails of those that sought the gods upon an evil day. Then for a while the people of those gods had rest while the gods lurked behind the mountain, waiting for the travellers from the Prosperous Isles. But the travellers came to shore and beached their ships, and sent six of their number to the mountain whereof they had been told. But they after many days returned, having not seen the gods but only the smoke that went upward from burned cities, and vultures that stood in the sky instead of answered prayer. And they all ran down their ships again into the sea, and set sail again and came to the Prosperous Isles. But in the distance crouching behind the ships the gods came wading through the sea that They might have the worship of the isles. And to every isle of the three the gods showed themselves in different garb and guise, and to all they said:

"Leave your flocks. Go forth and fight for the honour of the gods."

And from one of the isles all the folk came forth in ships to battle for gods that strode through the isle like kings. And from another they came to fight for gods that walked like humble men upon the earth in beggars' rags; and the people of the other isle fought for the honour of gods that were clothed in hair like beasts; and had many gleaming eyes and claws upon their foreheads. But of how these people fought till the isles grew desolate but very glorious, and all for the fame of the gods, are many histories writ.

NIGHT AND MORNING

Once in an arbour of the gods above the fields of twilight Night wandering alone came suddenly on Morning. Then Night drew from his face his cloak of dark grey mists and said: “See, I am Night,” and they two sitting in that arbour of the gods, Night told wondrous stories of old mysterious happenings in the dark. And Morning sat and wondered, gazing into the face of Night and at his wreath of stars. And Morning told how the rains of Snamarthis smoked in the plain, but Night told how Snamarthis held riot in the dark, with revelry and drinking and tales told by kings, till all the hosts of Meenath crept against it and the lights went out and there arose the din of arms or ever Morning came. And Night told how Sindana the beggar had dreamed that he was a King, and Morning told how she had seen Sindana find suddenly an army in the plain, and how he had gone to it thinking he was King and the army had believed him, and Sindana now ruled over Marthis and Targadrides, Dynath, Zahn, and Tumeida. And most Night loved to tell of Assarnees, whose ruins are scant memories on the desert’s edge, but Morning told of the twin cities of Nardis and Timaut that lorded over the plain. And Night told terribly of what Mynandes found when he walked through his own city in the dark. And ever at the elbow of regal Night whispers arose saying: “Tell Morning *this*.”

And ever Night told and ever Morning wondered. And Night spake on, and told what the dead had done when they came in the darkness on the King that had led them into battle once. And Night knew who slew Darnex and how it was done. Moreover, he told why the seven Kings tortured Sydatheris and what Sydatheris said just at the last, and how the Kings went forth and took their lives.

And Night told whose blood had stained the marble steps that lead to the temple in Ozahn, and why the skull within it wears a golden crown, and whose soul is in the wolf that howls in the dark against the city. And Night knew whither the tigers go out of the Irasian desert and the place where they meet together, and who speaks to them and what she says and why. And he told why human teeth had bitten the iron hinge in the great gate that swings in the walls of Mondas, and who came up out of the marsh alone in the darktime and demanded audience of the King and told the King a lie, and how the King, believing it, went down into the vaults of his palace and

found only toads and snakes, who slew the King. And he told of ventures in palace towers in the quiet, and knew the spell whereby a man might send the light of the moon right into the soul of his foe. And Night spoke of the forest and the stirring of shadows and soft feet pattering and peering eyes, and of the fear that sits behind the trees taking to itself the shape of something crouched to spring.

But far under that arbour of the gods down on the earth the mountain peak Mondana looked Morning in the eyes and forsook his allegiance to Night, and one by one the lesser hills about Mondana's knees greeted the Morning. And all the while in the plains the shapes of cities came looming out of the dusk. And Kongros stood forth with all her pinnacles, and the winged figure of Poesy carved upon the eastern portal of her gate, and the squat figure of Avarice carved facing it upon the west; and the bat began to tire of going up and down her streets, and already the owl was home. And the dark lions went up out of the plain back to their caves again. Not as yet shone any dew upon the spider's snare nor came the sound of any insects stirring or bird of the day, and full allegiance all the valleys owned still to their Lord the Night. Yet earth was preparing for another ruler, and kingdom by kingdom she stole away from Night, and there marched through the dreams of men a million heralds that cried with the voice of the cock: "Lo! Morning come behind us." But in that arbour of the gods above the fields of twilight the star wreath was paling about the head of Night, and ever more wonderful on Morning's brow appeared the mark of power. And at the moment when the camp fires pale and the smoke goes grey to the sky, and camels sniff the dawn, suddenly Morning forgot Night. And out of that arbour of the gods, and away to the haunts of the dark, Night with his swart cloak slunk away; and Morning placed her hand upon the mists and drew them upward and revealed the earth, and drove the shadows before her, and they followed Night. And suddenly the mystery quitted haunting shapes, and an old glamour was gone, and far and wide over the fields of earth a new splendour arose.

USURY

The men of Zonu hold that Yahn is God, who sits as a usurer behind a heap of little lustrous gems and ever clutches at them with both his arms. Scarce larger than a drop of water are the gleaming jewels that lie under the grasping talons of Yahn, and every jewel is a life. Men tell in Zonu that the earth was empty when Yahn devised his plan, and on it no life stirred. Then Yahn lured to him shadows whose home was beyond the Rim, who knew little of joys and nought of any sorrow, whose place was beyond the Rim before the birth of Time. These Yahn lured to him and showed them his heap of gems; and in the jewels there was light, and green fields glistened in them, and there were glimpses of blue sky and little streams, and very faintly little gardens showed that flowered in orchard lands. And some showed winds in the heaven, and some showed the arch of the sky with a waste plain drawn across it, with grasses bent in the wind and never aught but the plain. But the gems that changed the most had in their centre the ever changing sea. Then the shadows gazed into the Lives and saw the green fields and the sea and earth and the gardens of earth. And Yahn said: "I will loan you each a Life, and you may do your work with it upon the Scheme of Things, and have each a shadow for his servant in green fields and in gardens, only for these things you shall polish these Lives with experience and cut their edges with your griefs, and in the end shall return them again to me."

And thereto the shadows consented, that they might have gleaming Lives and have shadows for their servants, and this thing became the Law. But the shadows, each with his Life, departed and came to Zonu and to other lands, and there with experience they polished the Lives of Yahn, and cut them with human griefs until they gleamed anew. And ever they found new scenes to gleam within these Lives, and cities and sails and men shone in them where there had been before only green fields and sea, and ever Yahn the usurer cried out to remind them of their bargain. When men added to their Lives scenes that were pleasant to Yahn, then was Yahn silent, but when they added scenes that pleased not the eyes of Yahn, then did he take a toll of sorrow from them because it was the Law.

But men forgot the usurer, and there arose some claiming to be wise in the Law, who said that after their labour, which they wrought upon their

Lives, was done, those Lives should be theirs to possess; so men took comfort from their toil and labour and the grinding and cutting of their griefs. But as their Lives began to shine with experience of many things, the thumb and forefinger of Yahn would suddenly close upon a Life, and the man became a shadow. But away beyond the Rim the shadows say:

"We have greatly laboured for Yahn, and have gathered griefs in the world, and caused his Lives to shine, and Yahn doeth nought for us. Far better had we stayed where no cares are, floating beyond the Rim."

And there the shadows fear lest ever again they be lured by specious promises to suffer usury at the hands of Yahn, who is overskilled in Law. Only Yahn sits and smiles, watching his hoard increase in preciousness, and hath no pity for the poor shadows whom he hath lured from their quiet to toil in the form of men.

And ever Yahn lures more shadows and sends them to brighten his Lives, sending the old Lives out again to make them brighter still; and sometimes he gives to a shadow a Life that was once a king's and sendeth him with it down to the earth to play the part of a beggar, or sometimes he sendeth a beggar's Life to play the part of a king. What careth Yahn?

The men of Zonu have been promised by those that claim to be wise in the Law that their Lives which they have toiled at shall be theirs to possess for ever, yet the men of Zonu fear that Yahn is greater and overskilled in the Law. Moreover it hath been said that Time will bring the hour when the wealth of Yahn shall be such as his dreams have lusted for. Then shall Yahn leave the earth at rest and trouble the shadows no more, but sit and gloat with his unseemly face over his hoard of Lives, for his soul is a usurer's soul. But others say, and they swear that this is true, that there are gods of Old, who be far greater than Yahn, who made the Law wherein Yahn is overskilled, and who will one day drive a bargain with him that shall be too hard for Yahn. Then Yahn shall wander away, a mean forgotten god, and perchance in some forsaken land shall haggle with the rain for a drop of water to drink, for his soul is a usurer's soul. And the Lives — who knoweth the gods of Old or what Their will shall be?

MLIDEEN

Upon an evening of the forgotten years the gods were seated upon Mowrah Nawut above Mlideen holding the avalanche in leash.

All in the Middle City stood the Temples of the city's priests, and hither came all the people of Mlideen to bring them gifts, and there it was the wont of the City's priests to carve them gods for Mlideen. For in a room apart in the Temple of Eld in the midst of the temples that stood in the Middle City of Mlideen there lay a book called the Book of Beautiful Devices, writ in a language that no man may read and writ long ago, telling how a man may make for himself gods that shall neither rage nor seek revenge against a little people. And ever the priests came forth from reading in the Book of Beautiful Devices and ever they sought to make benignant gods, and all the gods that they made were different from each other, only their eyes turned all upon Mlideen.

But upon Mowrah Nawut for all of the forgotten years the gods had waited and forborne until the people of Mlideen should have carven one hundred gods. Never came lightnings from Mowrah Nawut crashing upon Mlideen, nor blight on harvests nor pestilence in the city, only upon Mowrah Nawut the gods sat and smiled. The people of Mlideen had said: "Yoma is god." And the gods sat and smiled. And after the forgetting of Yoma and the passing of years the people had said: "Zungari is god." And the gods sat and smiled.

Then on the altar of Zungari a priest had set a figure squat, carven in purple agate, saying: "Yazun is god." Still the gods sat and smiled.

About the feet of Yonu, Bazun, Nidish and Sundrao had gone the worship of the people of Mlideen, and still the gods sat holding the avalanche in leash above the city.

There set a great calm towards sunset over the heights, and Mowrah Nawut stood up still with gleaming snow, and into the hot city cool breezes blew from his benignant slopes as Tarsi Zalo, high prophet of Mlideen, carved out of a great sapphire the city's hundredth god, and then upon Mowrah Nawut the gods turned away saying: "One hundred infamies have

now been wrought." And they looked no longer upon Mlideen and held the avalanche no more in leash, and he leapt forward howling.

Over the Middle City of Mlideen now lies a mass of rocks, and on the rocks a new city is builded wherein people dwell who know not old Mlideen, and the gods are seated on Mowrah Nawut still. And in the new city men worship carven gods, and the number of the gods that they have carven is ninety and nine, and I, the prophet, have found a curious stone and go to carve it into the likeness of a god for all Mlideen to worship.

THE SECRET OF THE GODS

Zyni Moe, the small snake, saw the cool river gleaming before him afar off and set out over the burning sand to reach it.

Uldoon, the prophet, came out of the desert and followed up the bank of the river towards his old home. Thirty years since Uldoon had left the city, where he was born, to live his life in a silent place where he might search for the secret of the gods. The name of his home was the City by the River, and in that city many prophets taught concerning many gods, and men made many secrets for themselves, but all the while none knew the Secret of the gods. Nor might any seek to find it, for if any sought men said of him:

"This man sins, for he giveth no worship to the gods that speak to our prophets by starlight when none heareth."

And Uldoon perceived that the mind of a man is as a garden, and that his thoughts are as the flowers, and the prophets of a man's city are as many gardeners who weed and trim, and who have made in the garden paths both smooth and straight, and only along these paths is a man's soul permitted to go lest the gardeners say, "This soul transgresseth." And from the paths the gardeners weed out every flower that grows, and in the garden they cut off all flowers that grow tall, saying:

"It is customary," and "it is written," and "this hath ever been," or "that hath not been before."

Therefore Uldoon saw that not in that city might he discover the Secret of the gods. And Uldoon said to the people:

"When the worlds began, the Secret of the gods lay written clear over the whole earth, but the feet of many prophets have trampled it out. Your prophets are all true men, but I go into the desert to find a truth which is truer than your prophets." Therefore Uldoon went into the desert and in storm and still he sought for many years. When the thunder roared over the mountains that limited the desert he sought the Secret in the thunder, but the gods spake not by the thunder. When the voices of the beasts disturbed the stillness under the stars he sought the secret there, but the gods spake not by the beasts.

Uldoon grew old and all the voices of the desert had spoken to Uldoon, but not the gods, when one night he heard Them whispering beyond the hills. And the gods whispered one to another, and turning Their faces

earthward They all wept. And Uldoon though he saw not the gods yet saw Their shadows turn as They went back to a great hollow in the hills; and there, all standing in the valley's mouth, They said:

"Oh, Morning Zai, oh, oldest of the gods, the faith of thee is gone, and yesterday for the last time thy name was spoken upon earth." And turning earthward they all wept again. And the gods tore white clouds out of the sky and draped them about the body of Morning Zai and bore him forth from his valley behind the hills, and muffled the mountain peaks with snow, and beat upon their summits with drum sticks carved of ebony, playing the dirge of the gods. And the echoes rolled about the passes and the winds howled, because the faith of the olden days was gone, and with it had sped the soul of Morning Zai. So through the mountain passes the gods came at night bearing Their dead father. And Uldoon followed. And the gods came to a great sepulchre of onyx that stood upon four fluted pillars of white marble, each carved out of four mountains, and therein the gods laid Morning Zai because the old faith was fallen. And there at the tomb of Their father the gods spake and Uldoon heard the Secret of the gods, and it became to him a simple thing such as a man might well guess — yet hath not. Then the soul of the desert arose and cast over the tomb its wreath of forgetfulness devised of drifting sand, and the gods strode home across the mountains to Their hollow land. But Uldoon left the desert and travelled many days, and so came to the river where it passes beyond the city to seek the sea, and following its bank came near to his old home. And the people of the City by the River, seeing him far off, cried out:

"Hast thou found the Secret of the gods?"

And he answered:

"I have found it, and the Secret of the gods is this" — :

Zyni Moe, the small snake, seeing the figure and the shadow of a man between him and the cool river, raised his head and struck once. And the gods are pleased with Zyni Moe, and have called him the protector of the Secret of the gods.

THE SOUTH WIND

Two players sat down to play a game together to while eternity away, and they chose the gods as pieces wherewith to play their game, and for their board of playing they chose the sky from rim to rim, whereon lay a little dust; and every speck of dust was a world upon the board of playing. And the players were robed and their faces veiled, and the robes and veils were alike, and their names were Fate and Chance. And as they played their game and moved the gods hither and thither about the board, the dust arose, and shone in the light from the players' eyes that gleamed behind the veils. Then said the gods: "See how We stir the dust."

It chanced, or was ordained (who knoweth which?) that Ord, a prophet, one night saw the gods as They strode knee deep among the stars. But as he gave Them worship, he saw the hand of a player, enormous over Their heads, stretched out to make his move. Then Ord, the prophet, knew. Had he been silent it might have still been well with Ord, but Ord went about the world crying out to all men, "There is a power over the gods."

This the gods heard. Then said They, "Ord hath seen."

Terrible is the vengeance of the gods, and fierce were Their eyes when They looked on the head of Ord and snatched out of his mind all knowledge of Themselves. And that man's soul went wandering afield to find for itself gods, for ever finding them not. Then out of Ord's Dream of Life the gods plucked the moon and the stars, and in the night-time he only saw black sky and saw the lights no more. Next the gods took from him, for Their vengeance resteth not, the birds and butterflies, flowers and leaves and insects and all small things, and the prophet looked on the world that was strangely altered, yet knew not of the anger of the gods. Then the gods sent away his familiar hills, to be seen no more by him, and all the pleasant woodlands on their summits and the further fields; and in a narrower world Ord walked round and round, now seeing little, and his soul still wandered searching for some gods and finding none.

Lastly, the gods took away the fields and stream and left to the prophet only his house and the larger things that were in it. Day by day They crept about him drawing films of mist between him and familiar things, till at last he beheld nought at all and was quite blind and unaware of the anger of the gods. Then Ord's world became only a world of sound, and only by hearing

he kept his hold upon Things. All the profit that he had out of his days was here some song from the hills or there the voice of the birds, and sound of the stream, or the drip of the falling rain. But the anger of the gods ceases not with the closing of flowers, nor is it assuaged by all the winter's snows, nor doth it rest in the full glare of summer, and They snatched away from Ord one night his world of sound and he awoke deaf. But as a man may smite away the hive of the bee, and the bee with all his fellows builds again, knowing not what hath smitten his hive or that it shall smite again, so Ord built for himself a world out of old memories and set it in the past. There he builded himself cities out of former joys, and therein built palaces of mighty things achieved, and with his memory as a key he opened golden locks and had still a world to live in, though the gods had taken from him the world of sound and all the world of sight. But the gods tire not from pursuing, and They seized his world of former things and took his memory away and covered up the paths that led into the past, and left him blind and deaf and forgetful among men, and caused all men to know that this was he who once had said that the gods were little things.

And lastly the gods took his soul, and out of it They fashioned the South Wind to roam the seas for ever and not have rest; and well the South Wind knows that he hath once understood somewhere and long ago, and so he moans to the islands and cries along southern shores, "I have known," and "I have known."

But all things sleep when the South Wind speaks to them and none heed his cry that he hath known, but are rather content to sleep. But still the South Wind, knowing that there is something that he hath forgot, goes on crying, "I have known," seeking to urge men to arise and to discover it. But none heed the sorrows of the South Wind even when he driveth his tears out of the South, so that though the South Wind cries on and on and never findeth rest none heed that there is aught that may be known, and the Secret of the gods is safe. But the business of the South Wind is with the North, and it is said that the time will one day come when he shall overcome the bergs and sink the seas of ice and come where the Secret of the gods is graven upon the pole. And the game of Fate and Chance shall suddenly cease and He that loses shall cease to be or ever to have been, and from the board of playing Fate or Chance (who knoweth which shall win?) shall sweep the gods away.

IN THE LAND OF TIME

Thus Karnith, King of Alatta, spake to his eldest son: “I bequeath to thee my city of Zoon, with its golden eaves, whereunder hum the bees. And I bequeath to thee also the land of Alatta, and all such other lands as thou art worthy to possess, for my three strong armies which I leave thee may well take Zindara and over-run Istahn, and drive back Onin from his frontier, and leaguer the walls of Yan, and beyond that spread conquest over the lesser lands of Hebith, Ebnon, and Karida. Only lead not thine armies against Zeenar, nor ever cross the Eidis.”

Thereat in the city of Zoon in the land of Alatta, under his golden eaves, died King Karnith, and his soul went whither had gone the souls of his sires the elder Kings, and the souls of their slaves.

Then Karnith Zo, the new King, took the iron crown of Alatta and afterwards went down to the plains that encircle Zoon and found his three strong armies clamouring to be led against Zeenar, over the river Eidis.

But the new King came back from his armies, and all one night in the great palace alone with his iron crown, pondered long upon war; and a little before dawn he saw dimly through his palace window, facing east over the city of Zoon and across the fields of Alatta, to far off where a valley opened on Istahn. There, as he pondered, he saw the smoke arising tall and straight over small houses in the plain and the fields where the sheep fed. Later the sun rose shining over Alatta as it shone over Istahn, and there arose a stir about the houses both in Alatta and Istahn, and cocks crowded in the city and men went out into the fields among the bleating sheep; and the King wondered if men did otherwise in Istahn. And men and women met as they went out to work and the sound of laughter arose from streets and fields; the King’s eyes gazed into the distance toward Istahn and still the smoke went upward tall and straight from the small houses. And the sun rose higher that shone upon Alatta and Istahn, causing the flowers to open wide in each, and the birds to sing and the voices of men and women to arise. And in the market place of Zoon caravans were astir that set out to carry merchandise to Istahn, and afterwards passed camels coming to Alatta with many tinkling bells. All this the King saw as he pondered much, who had not pondered before. Westward the Agnid mountains frowned in the distance

guarding the river Eidis; behind them the fierce people of Zeenar lived in a bleak land.

Later the King, going abroad through his new kingdom, came on the Temple of the gods of Old. There he found the roof shattered and the marble columns broken and tall weeds met together in the inner shrine, and the gods of Old, bereft of worship or sacrifice, neglected and forgotten. And the King asked of his councillors who it was that had overturned this temple of the gods or caused the gods Themselves to be thus forsaken. And they answered him:

"Time has done this."

Next the King came upon a man bent and crippled, whose face was furrowed and worn, and the King having seen no such sight within the court of his father said to the man:

"Who hath done this thing to you?"

And the old man answered:

"Time hath ruthlessly done it."

But the King and his councillors went on, and next they came upon a body of men carrying among them a hearse. And the King asked his councillors closely concerning death, for these things had not before been expounded to the King. And the oldest of the councillors answered:

"Death, O King, is a gift sent by the gods by the hand of their servant Time, and some receive it gladly, and some are forced reluctantly to take it, and before others it is suddenly flung in the middle of the day. And with this gift that Time hath brought him from the gods a man must go forth into the dark to possess no other thing for so long as the gods are willing."

But the King went back to his palace and gathered the greatest of his prophets and his councillors and asked them more particularly concerning Time. And they told the King how that Time was a great figure standing like a tall shadow in the dusk or striding, unseen, across the world, and how that he was the slave of the gods and did Their bidding, but ever chose new masters, and how all the former masters of Time were dead and Their shrines forgotten. And one said:

"I have seen him once when I went down to play again in the garden of my childhood because of certain memories. And it was towards evening and the light was pale, and I saw Time standing over the little gate, pale like the light, and he stood between me and that garden and had stolen my memories because he was mightier than I."

And another said:

"I, too, have seen the Enemy of my House. For I saw him when he strode over the fields that I knew well and led a stranger by the hand to place him in my home to sit where my forefathers sat. And I saw him afterwards walk thrice round the house and stoop and gather up the glamour from the lawns and brush aside the tall poppies in the garden and spread weeds in his pathway where he strode through the remembered nooks."

And another said:

"He went one day into the desert and brought up life out of the waste places, and made it cry bitterly and covered it with the desert again."

And another said:

"I too saw him once seated in the garden of a child tearing the flowers, and afterwards he went away through many woodlands and stooped down as he went, and picked the leaves one by one from the trees."

And another said:

"I saw him once by moonlight standing tall and black amidst the ruins of a shrine in the old kingdom of Amarna, doing a deed by night. And he wore a look on his face such as murderers wear as he busied himself to cover over something with weeds and dust. Thereafter in Amarna the people of that old Kingdom missed their god, in whose shrine I saw Time crouching in the night, and they have not since beheld him."

And all the while from the distance at the city's edge rose a hum from the three armies of the King clamouring to be led against Zeenar. Thereat the King went down to his three armies and speaking to their chiefs said:

"I will not go down clad with murder to be King over other lands. I have seen the same morning arising on Istahn that also gladdened Alatta, and have heard Peace lowing among the flowers. I will not desolate homes to rule over an orphaned land and a land widowed. But I will lead you against the pledged enemy of Alatta who shall crumble the towers of Zoon and hath gone far to overthrow our gods. He is the foe of Zindara and Istahn and many-citadeled Yan, Hebith and Ebnon may not overcome him nor Karida be safe against him among her bleakest mountains. He is a foe mightier than Zeenar with frontiers stronger than Eidis; he leers at all the peoples of the earth and mocks their gods and covets their builded cities. Therefore we will go forth and conquer Time and save the gods of Alatta from his clutch, and coming back victorious shall find that Death is gone and age and illness departed, and here we shall live for ever by the golden eaves of Zoon, while

the bees hum among unrusted gables and never crumbling towers. There shall be neither fading nor forgetting, nor ever dying nor sorrow, when we shall have freed the people and pleasant fields of the earth from inexorable Time."

And the armies swore that they would follow the King to save the world and the gods.

So the next day the King set forth with his three armies and crossed many rivers and marched through many lands, and wherever they went they asked for news of Time.

And the first day they met a woman with her face furrowed and lined, who told them that she had been beautiful and that Time had smitten her in the face with his five claws.

Many an old man they met as they marched in search of Time. All had seen him but none could tell them more, except that some said he went that way and pointed to a ruined tower or to an old and broken tree.

And day after day and month by month the King pushed on with his armies, hoping to come at last on Time. Sometimes they encamped at night near palaces of beautiful design or beside gardens of flowers, hoping to find their enemy when he came to desecrate in the dark. Sometimes they came on cobwebs, sometimes on rusted chains and houses with broken roofs or crumbling walls. Then the armies would push on apace thinking that they were closer upon the track of Time.

As the weeks passed by and weeks grew to months, and always they heard reports and rumours of Time, but never found him, the armies grew weary of the great march, but the King pushed on and would let none turn back, saying always that the enemy was near at hand.

Month in, month out, the King led on his now unwilling armies, till at last they had marched for close upon a year and came to the village of Astarma very far to the north. There many of the King's weary soldiers deserted from his armies and settled down in Astarma and married Astarmian girls. By these soldiers we have the march of the armies clearly chronicled to the time when they came to Astarma, having been nigh a year upon the march. And the army left that village and the children cheered them as they went up the street, and five miles distant they passed over a ridge of hills and out of sight. Beyond this less is known, but the rest of this chronicle is gathered from the tales that the veterans of the King's armies

used to tell in the evenings about the fires in Zoon and remembered afterwards by the men of Zeenar.

It is mostly credited in these days that such of the King's armies as went on past Astarma came at last (it is not known after how long a time) over a crest of a slope where the whole earth slanted green to the north. Below it lay green fields and beyond them moaned the sea with never shore nor island so far as the eye could reach. Among the green fields lay a village, and on this village the eyes of the King and his armies were turned as they came down the slope. It lay beneath them, grave with seared antiquity, with old-world gables stained and bent by the lapse of frequent years, with all its chimneys awry. Its roofs were tiled with antique stones covered over deep with moss, each little window looked with a myriad strange cut panes on the gardens shaped with quaint devices and overrun with weeds. On rusted hinges the doors sung to and fro and were fashioned of planks of immemorial oak with black knots gaping from their sockets. Against it all there beat the thistle-down, about it clambered the ivy or swayed the weeds; tall and straight out of the twisted chimneys arose blue columns of smoke, and blades of grass peeped upward between the huge cobbles of the unmolested street. Between the gardens and the cobbled streets stood hedges higher than a horseman might look, of stalwart thorn, and upward through it clambered the convolvulus to peer into the garden from the top. Before each house there was cut a gap in the hedge, and in it swung a wicket gate of timber soft with the rain and years, and green like the moss. Over all of it there brooded age and the full hush of things bygone and forgotten. Upon this derelict that the years had cast up out of antiquity the King and his armies gazed long. Then on the hill slope the King made his armies halt, and went down alone with one of his chiefs into the village.

Presently there was a stir in one of the houses, and a bat flew out of the door into the daylight, and three mice came running out of the doorway down the step, an old stone cracked in two and held together by moss; and there followed an old man bending on a stick with a white beard coming to the ground, wearing clothes that were glossed with use, and presently there came others out of the other houses, all of them as old, and all hobbling on sticks. These were the oldest people that the King had ever beheld, and he asked them the name of the village and who they were; and one of them answered, "This is the City of the Aged in the Territory of Time."

And the King said, "Is Time then here?"

And one of the old men pointed to a great castle standing on a steep hill and said: “Therein dwells Time, and we are his people;” and they all looked curiously at King Karnith Zo, and the eldest of the villagers spoke again and said: “Whence do you come, you that are so young?” and Karnith Zo told him how he had come to conquer Time to save the world and the gods, and asked them whence they came.

And the villagers said:

“We are older than always, and know not whence we came, but we are the people of Time, and here from the Edge of Everything he sends out his hours to assail the world, and you may never conquer Time.” But the King went back to his armies, and pointed towards the castle on the hill and told them that at last they had found the Enemy of the Earth; and they that were older than always went back slowly into their houses with the creaking of olden doors. And there they went across the fields and passed the village. From one of his towers Time eyed them all the while, and in battle order they closed in on the steep hill as Time sat still in his great tower and watched.

But as the feet of the foremost touched the edge of the hill Time hurled five years against them, and the years passed over their heads and the army still came on, an army of older men. But the slope seemed steeper to the King and to every man in his army, and they breathed more heavily. And Time summoned up more years, and one by one he hurled them at Karnith Zo and at all his men. And the knees of the army stiffened, and their beards grew and turned grey, and the hours and days and the months went singing over their heads, and their hair turned whiter and whiter, and the conquering hours bore down, and the years rushed on and swept the youth of that army clear away till they came face to face under the walls of the castle of Time with a mass of howling years, and found the top of the slope too steep for aged men. Slowly and painfully, harassed with agues and chills, the King rallied his aged army that tottered down the slope.

Slowly the King led back his warriors over whose heads had shrieked the triumphant years. Year in, year out, they straggled southwards, always towards Zoon; they came, with rust upon their spears and long beards flowing, again into Astarma, and none knew them there. They passed again by towns and villages where once they had inquired curiously concerning Time, and none knew them there either. They came again to the palaces and gardens where they had waited for Time in the night, and found that Time

had been there. And all the while they set a hope before them that they should come on Zoon again and see its golden eaves. And no one knew that unperceived behind them there lurked and followed the gaunt figure of Time cutting off stragglers one by one and overwhelming them with his hours, only men were missed from the army every day, and fewer and fewer grew the veterans of Karnith Zo.

But at last after many a month, one night as they marched in the dusk before the morning, dawn suddenly ascending shone on the eaves of Zoon, and a great cry ran through the army:

"Alatta, Alatta!"

But drawing nearer they found that the gates were rusted and weeds grew tall along the outer walls, many a roof had fallen, gables were blackened and bent, and the golden eaves shone not as heretofore. And the soldiers entering the city expecting to find their sisters and sweethearts of a few years ago saw only old women wrinkled with great age and knew not who they were.

Suddenly someone said:

"He has been here too."

And then they knew that while they searched for Time, Time had gone forth against their city and leaguered it with the years, and had taken it while they were far away and enslaved their women and children with the yoke of age. So all that remained of the three armies of Karnith Zo settled in the conquered city. And presently the men of Zeenar crossed over the river Eidis and easily conquering an army of aged men took all Alatta for themselves, and their kings reigned thereafter in the city of Zoon. And sometimes the men of Zeenar listened to the strange tales that the old Alattans told of the years when they made battle against Time. Such of these tales as the men of Zeenar remembered they afterwards set forth, and this is all that may be told of those adventurous armies that went to war with Time to save the world and the gods, and were overwhelmed by the hours and the years.

THE RELENTING OF SARNIDAC

The lame boy Sarnidac tended sheep on a hill to the southward of the city. Sarnidac was a dwarf and greatly derided in the city. For the women said:

"It is very funny that Sarnidac is a dwarf," and they would point their fingers at him saying:— "This is Sarnidac, he is a dwarf; also he is very lame."

Once the doors of all the temples in the world swung open to the morning, and Sarnidac with his sheep upon the hill saw strange figures going down the white road, always southwards. All the morning he saw the dust rising above the strange figures and always they went southwards right as far as the rim of the Nydoon hills where the white road could be seen no more. And the figures stooped and seemed to be larger than men, but all men seemed very large to Sarnidac, and he could not see clearly through the dust. And Sarnidac shouted to them, as he hailed all people that passed down the long white road, and none of the figures looked to left or right and none of them turned to answer Sarnidac. But then few people ever answered him because he was lame, and a small dwarf.

Still the figures went striding swiftly, stooping forward through the dust, till at last Sarnidac came running down his hill to watch them closer. As he came to the white road the last of the figures passed him, and Sarnidac ran limping behind him down the road.

For Sarnidac was weary of the city wherein all derided him, and when he saw these figures all hurrying away he thought that they went perhaps to some other city beyond the hills over which the sun shone brighter, or where there was more food, for he was poor, even perhaps where people had not the custom of laughing at Sarnidac. So this procession of figures that stooped and seemed larger than men went southward down the road and a lame dwarf hobbled behind them.

Khamazan, now called the City of the Last of Temples, lies southward of the Nydoon hills. This is the story of Pompeides, now chief prophet of the only temple in the world, and greatest of all the prophets that have been:

On the slopes of Nydoon I was seated once above Khamazan. There I saw figures in the morning striding through much dust along the road that leads across the world. Striding up the hill they came towards me, not with the gait of men, and soon the first one came to the crest of the hill where the

road dips to find the plains again, where lies Khamazan. And now I swear by all the gods that are gone that this thing happened as I shall say it, and was surely so. When those that came striding up the hill came to its summit they took not the road that goes down into the plains nor trod the dust any longer, but went straight on and upwards, striding as they strode before, as though the hill had not ended nor the road dipped. And they strode as though they trod no yielding substance, yet they stepped upwards through the air.

This the gods did, for They were not born men who strode that day so strangely away from earth.

But I, when I saw this thing, when already three had passed me, leaving earth, cried out before the fourth:

'Gods of my childhood, guardians of little homes, whither are ye going, leaving the round earth to swim alone and forgotten in so great a waste of sky?'

And one answered:

'Heresy apace shoots her fierce glare over the world and men's faith grows dim and the gods go. Men shall make iron gods and gods of steel when the wind and the ivy meet within the shrines of the temples of the gods of old.'

And I left that place as a man leaves fire by night, and going plainwards down the white road that the gods spurned cried out to all that I passed to follow me, and so crying came to the city's gates. And there I shouted to all near the gates:

'From yonder hilltop the gods are leaving earth.'

Then I gathered many, and we all hastened to the hill to pray the gods to tarry, and there we cried out to the last of the departing gods:

'Gods of old prophecy and of men's hopes, leave not the earth, and all our worship shall hum about Your ears as never it hath before, and oft the sacrifice shall squeal upon Your altars.'

And I said: —

'Gods of still evenings and quiet nights, go not from earth and leave not Your carven shrines, and all men shall worship You still. For between us and yonder still blue spaces oft roam the thunder and the storms, there in his hiding lurks the dark eclipse, and there are stored all snows and hails and lightnings that shall vex the earth for a million years. Gods of our hopes, how shall men's prayers crying from empty shrines pass through such

terrible spaces; how shall they ever fare above the thunder and many storms to whatever place the gods may go in that blue waste beyond?'

But the gods bent straight forward, and trampled through the sky and looked not to the right nor left nor downwards, nor ever heeded my prayer.

And one cried out hoping yet to stay the gods, though nearly all were gone, saying: —

'O gods, rob not the earth of the dim hush that hangs round all Your temples, bereave not all the world of old romance, take not the glamour from the moonlight nor tear the wonder out of the white mists in every land; for, O ye gods of the childhood of the world, when You have left the earth you shall have taken the mystery from the sea and all its glory from antiquity, and You shall have wrenched out hope from the dim future. There shall be no strange cries at night time half understood, nor songs in the twilight, and the whole of the wonder shall have died with last year's flowers in little gardens or hill-slopes leaning south; for with the gods must go the enchantment of the plains and all the magic of dark woods, and something shall be lacking from the quiet of early dawn. For it would scarce befit the gods to leave the earth and not take with Them that which They had given it. Out beyond the still blue spaces Ye will need the holiness of sunset for Yourselves and little sacred memories and the thrill that is in stories told by firesides long ago. One strain of music, one song, one line of poetry and one kiss, and a memory of one pool with rushes, and each one the best, shall the gods take to whom the best belongs, when the gods go.

'Sing a lamentation, people of Khamazan, sing a lamentation for all the children of earth at the feet of the departing gods. Sing a lamentation for the children of earth who now must carry their prayers to empty shrines and around empty shrines must rest at last.'

Then when our prayers were ended and our tears shed, we beheld the last and smallest of the gods halted upon the hilltop. Twice he called to Them with a cry somewhat like the cry wherewith our shepherds hail their brethren, and long gazed after Them, and then deigned to look no longer and to tarry upon earth and turn his eyes on men. Then a great shout went up when we saw that our hopes were saved and that there was still on earth a haven for our prayers. Smaller than men now seemed the figures that had loomed so big, as one behind the other far over our heads They still strode upwards. But the small god that had pitied the world came with us down the hill, still deigning to tread the road, though strangely, not as men tread, and

into Khamazan. There we housed him in the palace of the King, for that was before the building of the temple of gold, and the King made sacrifice before him with his own hands, and he that had pitied the world did eat the flesh of the sacrifice.

And the Book of the Knowledge of the gods in Khamazan tells how the small god that pitied the world told his prophets that his name was Sarnidac and that he herded sheep, and that therefore he is called the shepherd god, and sheep are sacrificed upon his altars thrice a day, and the North, East, West and the South are the four hurdles of Sarnidac and the white clouds are his sheep. And the Book of the Knowledge of the gods tells further how the day on which Pompeides found the gods shall be kept for ever as a fast until the evening and called the Fast of the Departing, but in the evening shall a feast be held which is named the Feast of the Relenting, for on that evening Sarnidac pitied the whole world and tarried.

And the people of Khamazan all prayed to Sarnidac, and dreamed their dreams and hoped their hopes because their temple was not empty. Whether the gods that are departed be greater than Sarnidac none know in Khamazan, but some believe that in their azure windows They have set lights that lost prayers swarming upwards may come to them like moths and at last find haven and light far up above the evening and the stillness where sit the gods.

But Sarnidac wondered at the strange figures, at the people of Khamazan, and at the palace of the King and the customs of the prophets, but wondered not more greatly at aught in Khamazan than he had wondered at the city which he had left. For Sarnidac, who had not known why men were unkind to him, thought that he had found at last the land for which the gods had let him hope, where men should have the custom of being kind to Sarnidac.

THE JEST OF THE GODS

Once the Older gods had need of laughter. Therefore They made the soul of a king, and set in it ambitions greater than kings should have, and lust for territories beyond the lust of other kings, and in this soul They set strength beyond the strength of others and fierce desire for power and a strong pride. Then the gods pointed earthward and sent that soul into the fields of men to live in the body of a slave. And the slave grew, and the pride and lust for power began to arise in his heart, and he wore shackles on his arms. Then in the Fields of Twilight the gods prepared to laugh.

But the slave went down to the shore of the great sea, and cast his body away and the shackles that were upon it, and strode back to the Fields of Twilight and stood up before the gods and looked Them in Their faces. This thing the gods, when They had prepared to laugh, had not foreseen. Lust for power burned strong in that King's soul, and there was all the strength and pride in it that the gods had placed therein, and he was too strong for the Older gods. He whose body had borne the lashes of men could brook no longer the dominion of the gods, and standing before Them he bade the gods to go. Up to Their lips leapt all the anger of the Older gods, being for the first time commanded, but the King's soul faced Them still, and Their anger died away and They averted Their eyes. Then Their thrones became empty, and the Fields of Twilight bare as the gods slunk far away. But the soul chose new companions.

THE DREAMS OF THE PROPHET

I

When the gods drave me forth to toil and assailed me with thirst and beat me down with hunger, then I prayed to the gods. When the gods smote the cities wherein I dwelt, and when Their anger scorched me and Their eyes burned, then did I praise the gods and offer sacrifice. But when I came again to my green land and found that all was gone, and the old mysterious haunts wherein I prayed as a child were gone, and when the gods tore up the dust and even the spider's web from the last remembered nook, then did I curse the gods, speaking it to Their faces, saying: —

"Gods of my prayers! Gods of my sacrifice! because Ye have forgotten the sacred places of my childhood, and they have therefore ceased to be, yet may I not forget. Because Ye have done this thing, Ye shall see cold altars and shall lack both my fear and praise. I shall not wince at Your lightnings, nor be awed when Ye go by."

Then looking seawards I stood and cursed the gods, and at this moment there came to me one in the garb of a poet, who said: —

"Curse not the gods."

And I said to him:

"Wherefore should I not curse Those that have stolen my sacred places in the night, and trodden down the gardens of my childhood?"

And he said "Come, and I will show thee." And I followed him to where two camels stood with their faces towards the desert. And we set out and I travelled with him for a great space, he speaking never a word, and so we came at last to a waste valley hid in the desert's midst. And herein, like fallen moons, I saw vast ribs that stood up white out of the sand, higher than the hills of the desert. And here and there lay the enormous shapes of skulls like the white marble domes of palaces built for tyrannous kings a long while since by armies of driven slaves. Also there lay in the desert other bones, the bones of vast legs and arms, against which the desert, like a besieging sea, ever advanced and already had half drowned. And as I gazed in wonder at these colossal things the poet said to me:

"The gods are dead."

And I gazed long in silence, and I said:

“These fingers, that are now so dead and so very white and still, tore once the flowers in gardens of my youth.”

But my companion said to me:

“I have brought thee here to ask of thee thy forgiveness of the gods, for I, being a poet, knew the gods, and would fain drive off the curses that hover above Their bones and bring Them men’s forgiveness as an offering at the last, that the weeds and the ivy may cover Their bones from the sun.”

And I said:

“They made Remorse with his fur grey like a rainy evening in the autumn, with many rending claws, and Pain with his hot hands and lingering feet, and Fear like a rat with two cold teeth carved each out of the ice of either pole, and Anger with the swift flight of the dragonfly in summer having burning eyes. I will not forgive these gods.”

But the poet said:

“Canst thou be angry with these beautiful white bones?” And I looked long at those curved and beautiful bones that were no longer able to hurt the smallest creature in all the worlds that they had made. And I thought long of the evil that they had done, and also of the good. But when I thought of Their great hands coming red and wet from battles to make a primrose for a child to pick, then I forgave the gods.

And a gentle rain came falling out of heaven and stilled the restless sand, and a soft green moss grew suddenly and covered the bones till they looked like strange green hills, and I heard a cry and awoke and found that I had dreamed, and looking out of my house into the street I found that a flash of lightning had killed a child. Then I knew that the gods still lived.

II

I lay asleep in the poppy fields of the gods in the valley of Alderon, where the gods come by night to meet together in council when the moon is low. And I dreamed that this was the Secret.

Fate and Chance had played their game and ended, and all was over, all the hopes and tears, regrets, desires and sorrows, things that men wept for and unremembered things, and kingdoms and little gardens and the sea, and the worlds and the moons and the suns; and what remained was nothing, having neither colour nor sound.

Then said Fate to Chance: “Let us play our old game again.” And they played it again together, using the gods as pieces, as they had played it oft before. So that those things which have been shall all be again, and under the same bank in the same land a sudden glare of singlight on the same spring day shall bring the same daffodil to bloom once more and the same child shall pick it, and not regretted shall be the billion years that fell between. And the same old faces shall be seen again, yet not bereaved of their familiar haunts. And you and I shall in a garden meet again upon an afternoon in summer when the sun stands midway between his zenith and the sea, where we met oft before. For Fate and Chance play but one game together with every move the same, and they play it oft to while eternity away.

PART II.

THE JOURNEY OF THE KING

I

One day the King turned to the women that danced and said to them: “Dance no more,” and those that bore the wine in jewelled cups he sent away. The palace of King Ebalon was emptied of sound of song and there rose the voices of heralds crying in the streets to find the prophets of the land.

Then went the dancers, the cupbearer and the singers down into the hard streets among the houses, Pattering Leaves, Silvern Fountain and Summer Lightning, the dancers whose feet the gods had not devised for stony ways, which had only danced for princes. And with them went the singer, Soul of the South, and the sweet singer, Dream of the Sea, whose voices the gods had attuned to the ears of kings, and old Istahn the cupbearer left his life’s work in the palace to tread the common ways, he that had stood at the elbows of three kings of Zarkandhu and had watched his ancient vintage feeding their valour and mirth as the waters of Tondaris feed the green plains to the south. Ever he had stood grave among their jests, but his heart warmed itself solely by the fire of the mirth of Kings. He too, with the singers and dancers, went out into the dark.

And throughout the land the heralds sought out the prophets thereof. Then one evening as King Ebalon sat alone within his palace there were brought before him all who had repute for wisdom and who wrote the histories of the times to be. Then the King spake, saying: “The King goeth upon a journey with many horses, yet riding upon none, when the pomp of travelling shall be heard in the streets and the sound of the lute and the drum and the name of the King. And I would know what princes and what people shall greet me on the other shore in the land to which I travel.”

Then fell a hush upon the prophets for they murmured: “All knowledge is with the King.”

Then said the King: “Thou first, Samahn, High Prophet of the Temple of gold in Azinorn, answer or thou shalt write no more the history of the times to be, but shalt toil with thy hand to make record of the little happenings of the days that were, as do the common men.”

Then said Samahn: “All knowledge is with the King,” and when the pomp of travelling shall be heard in the streets and the slow horses whereon

the King rideth not go behind lute and drum, then, as the King well knoweth, thou shalt go down to the great white house of Kings and, entering the portals where none are worthy to follow, shalt make obeisance alone to all the elder Kings of Zarkandhu, whose bones are seated upon golden thrones grasping their sceptres still. Therein thou shalt go with robes and sceptre through the marble porch, but thou shalt leave behind thee thy gleaming crown that others may wear it, and as the times go by come in to swell the number of the thirty Kings that sit in the great white house on golden thrones. There is one doorway in the great white house, and it stands wide with marble portals yawning for kings, but when it shall receive thee, and thine obeisance hath been made because of thine obligation to the thirty Kings, thou shalt find at the back of the house an unknown door through which the soul of a King may just pass, and leaving thy bones upon a golden throne thou shalt go unseen out of the great white house to tread the velvet spaces that lie among the worlds. Then, O King, it were well to travel fast and not to tarry about the houses of men as do the souls of some who still bewail the sudden murder that sent them upon the journey before their time, and who, being yet both to go, linger in dark chambers all the night. These, setting forth to travel in the dawn and travelling all the day, see earth behind them gleaming when an evening falls, and again are loth to leave its pleasant haunts, and come back again through dark woods and up into some old loved chamber, and ever tarry between home and flight and find no rest.

Thou wilt set forth at once because the journey is far and lasts for many hours; but the hours on the velvet spaces are the hours of the gods, and we may not say what time such an hour may be if reckoned in mortal years.

At last thou shalt come to a grey place filled with mist, with grey shapes standing before it which are altars, and on the altars rise small red flames from dying fires that scarce illumine the mist. And in the mist it is dark and cold because the fires are low. These are the altars of the people's faiths, and the flames are the worship of men, and through the mist the gods of Old go groping in the dark and in the cold. There thou shalt hear a voice cry feebly: "Inyani, Inyani, lord of the thunder, where art thou, for I cannot see?" And a voice shall answer faintly in the cold: "O maker of many worlds, I am here." And in that place the gods of Old are nearly deaf for the prayers of men grow few, they are nigh blind because the fires burn low upon the altars of men's faiths and they are very cold. And all about the place of mist there lies a moaning sea which is called the Sea of Souls. And

behind the place of mist are the dim shapes of mountains, and on the peak of one there glows a silvern light that shines in the moaning sea; and ever as the flames on the altars die before the gods of Old the light on the mountain increases, and the light shines over the mist and never through it as the gods of Old grow blind. It is said that the light on the mountain shall one day become a new god who is not of the gods of Old.

There, O King, thou shalt enter the Sea of Souls by the shore where the altars stand which are covered in mist. In that sea are the souls of all that ever lived on the worlds and all that ever shall live, all freed from earth and flesh. And all the souls in that sea are aware of one another but more than with hearing or sight or by taste or touch or smell, and they all speak to each other yet not with lips, with voices which need no sound. And over the sea lies music as winds o'er an ocean on earth, and there unfettered by language great thoughts set outward through the souls as on earth the currents go.

Once did I dream that in a mist-built ship I sailed upon that sea and heard the music that is not of instruments, and voices not from lips, and woke and found that I was upon the earth and that the gods had lied to me in the night. Into this sea from fields of battle and cities come down the rivers of lives, and ever the gods have taken onyx cups and far and wide into the worlds again have flung the souls out of the sea, that each soul may find a prison in the body of a man with five small windows closely barred, and each one shackled with forgetfulness.

But all the while the light on the mountain grows, and none may say what work the god that shall be born of the silvern light shall work on the Sea of Souls, when the gods of Old are dead and the Sea is living still.

And answer made the King:

"Thou that art a prophet of the gods of Old, go back and see that those red flames burn more brightly on the altars in the mist, for the gods of Old are easy and pleasant gods, and thou canst not say what toil shall vex our souls when the god of the light on the mountain shall stride along the shore where bleach the huge bones of the gods of Old."

And Samahn answered: "All knowledge is with the King."

II

Then the King called to Ynath bidding him speak concerning the journey of the King. Ynath was the prophet that sat at the Eastern gate of the Temple of Gorandhu. There Ynath prayed his prayers to all the passers by lest ever the gods should go abroad, and one should pass him dressed in mortal guise. And men are pleased as they walk by that Eastern gate that Ynath should pray to them for fear that they be gods, so men bring gifts to Ynath in the Eastern gate.

And Ynath said: "All knowledge is with the King. When a strange ship comes to anchor in the air outside thy chamber window, thou shalt leave thy well-kept garden and it shall become a prey to the nights and days and be covered again with grass. But going aboard thou shalt set sail over the Sea of Time and well shall the ship steer through the many worlds and still sail on. If other ships shall pass thee on the way and hail thee saying: 'From what port' thou shalt answer them: 'From Earth.' And if they ask thee 'whither bound?' then thou shalt answer: 'The End.' Or thou shalt hail them saying: 'From what port?' And they shall answer: 'From The End called also The Beginning, and bound to Earth.' And thou shalt sail away till like an old sorrow dimly felt by happy men the worlds shall gleam in the distance like one star, and as the star pales thou shalt come to the shore of space where aeons rolling shorewards from Time's sea shall lash up centuries to foam away in years. There lies the Centre Garden of the gods, facing full seawards. All around lie songs that on earth were never sung, fair thoughts not heard among the worlds, dream pictures never seen that drifted over Time without a home till at last the aeons swept them on to the shore of space. And in the Centre Garden of the gods bloom many fancies. Therein once some souls were playing where the gods walked up and down and to and fro. And a dream came in more beauteous than the rest on the crest of a wave of Time, and one soul going downward to the shore clutched at the dream and caught it. Then over the dreams and stories and old songs that lay on the shore of space the hours came sweeping back, and the centuries caught that soul and swirled him with his dream far out to the Sea of Time, and the aeons swept him earthwards and cast him into a palace with all the might of the sea and left him there with his dream. The child grew to a King and still clutched at his dream till the people wondered and laughed. Then, O King, Thou didst cast thy dream back into the Sea, and Time drowned it and men laughed no more, but thou didst forget that a certain sea beat on a distant shore and that there was a garden and therein

souls. But at the end of the journey that thou shalt take, when thou comest to the shore of space again thou shalt go up the beach, and coming to a garden gate that stands in a garden wall shalt remember these things again, for it stands where the hours assail not above the beating of Time, far up the shore, and nothing altereth there. So thou shalt go through the garden gate and hear again the whispering of the souls when they talk low where sing the voices of the gods. There with kindred souls thou shalt speak as thou didst of yore and tell them what befell thee beyond the tides of time and how they took thee and made of thee a King so that thy soul found no rest. There in the Centre Garden thou shalt sit at ease and watch the gods all rainbow-clad go up and down and to and fro on the paths of dreams and songs, and shalt not venture down to the cheerless sea. For that which a man loves most is not on this side of Time, and all which drifts on its aeons is a lure.

"All knowledge is with the King."

Then said the King: "Ay, there was a dream once but Time hath swept it away."

III

Then spake Monith, Prophet of the Temple of Azure that stands on the snow-peak of Ahmoon and said: "All knowledge is with the King. Once thou didst set out upon a one day's journey riding thy horse and before thee had gone a beggar down the road, and his name was Yeb. Him thou didst overtake and when he heeded not thy coming thou didst ride over him.

"Upon the journey that thou shalt one day take riding upon no horse, this beggar has set out before thee and is labouring up the crystal steps towards the moon as a man goeth up the steps of a high tower in the dark. On the moon's edge beneath the shadow of Mount Angises he shall rest awhile and then shall climb the crystal steps again. Then a great journey lies before him before he may rest again till he come to that star that is called the left eye of Gundo. Then a journey of many crystal steps lieth before him again with nought to guide him but the light of Omrazu. On the edge of Omrazu shall Yeb tarry long, for the most dreadful part of his journey lieth before him. Up the crystal steps that lie beyond Omrazu he must go, and any that follow, though the howling of all the meteors that ride the sky; for in that part of the crystal space go many meteors up and down all squealing in the

dark, which greatly perplex all travellers. And, if he may see though the gleaming of the meteors and in spite of their uproar come safely through, he shall come to the star Omrund at the edge of the Track of Stars. And from star to star along the Track of Stars the soul of a man may travel with more ease, and there the journey lies no more straight forward, but curves to the right."

Then said King Ebalon:

"Of this beggar whom my horse smote down thou hast spoken much, but I sought to know by what road a King should go when he taketh his last royal journey, and what princes and what people should meet him upon another shore."

Then answered Monith:

"All knowledge is with the King. It hath been doomed by the gods, who speak not in jest, that thou shalt follow the soul that thou didst send alone upon its journey, that that soul go not unattended up the crystal steps.

"Moreover, as this beggar went upon his lonely journey he dared to curse the King, and his curses lie like a red mist along the valleys and hollows wherever he uttered them. By these red mists, O King, thou shalt track him as a man follows a river by night until thou shalt fare at last to the land wherein he hath blessed thee (repenting of anger at last), and thou shalt see his blessing lie over the land like a blaze of golden sunshine illumining fields and gardens."

Then said the King:

"The gods have spoken hard above the snowy peak of this mountain Ahmoon."

And Monith said:

"How a man may come to the shore of space beyond the tides of time I know not, but it is doomed that thou shalt certainly first follow the beggar past the moon, Omrund and Omrazu till thou comest to the Track of Stars, and up the Track of Stars coming towards the right along the edge of it till thou comest to Ingazi. There the soul of the beggar Yeb sat long, then, breathing deep, set off on his great journey earthward adown the crystal steps. Straight through the spaces where no stars are found to rest at, following the dull gleam of earth and her fields till he come at last where journeys end and start."

Then said King Ebalon:

"If this hard tale be true, how shall I find the beggar that I must follow when I come again to the earth?"

And the Prophet answered:

"Thou shalt know him by his name and find him in this place, for that beggar shall be called King Ebalon and he shall be sitting upon the throne of the Kings of Zarkandhu."

And the King answered:

"If one sit upon this throne whom men call King Ebalon, who then shall I be?"

And the Prophet answered:

"Thou shalt be a beggar and thy name shall be Yeb, and thou shalt ever tread the road before the palace waiting for alms from the King whom men shall call Ebalon."

Then said the King:

"Hard gods indeed are those that tramp the snows of Ahmoon about the temple of Azure, for if I sinned against this beggar called Yeb, they too have sinned against him when they doomed him to travel on this weary journey though he hath not offended."

And Monith said:

"He too hath offended, for he was angry as thy horse struck him, and the gods smite anger. And his anger and his curses doom him to journey without rest as also they doom thee."

Then said the King:

"Thou that sittest upon Ahmoon in the Temple of Azure, dreaming thy dreams and making prophecies, foresee the ending of this weary quest and tell me where it shall be?"

And Monith answered:

"As a man looks across great lakes I have gazed into the days to be, and as the great flies come upon four wings of gauze to skim over blue waters, so have my dreams come sailing two by two out of the days to be. And I dreamed that King Ebalon, whose soul was not thy soul, stood in his palace in a time far hence, and beggars thronged the street outside, and among them was Yeb, a beggar, having thy soul. And it was on the morning of a festival and the King came robed in white, with all his prophets and his

seers and magicians, all down the marble steps to bless the land and all that stood therein as far as the purple hills, because it was the morning of festival. And as the King raised up his hand over the beggars' heads to bless the fields and rivers and all that stood therein, I dreamed that the quest was ended.

"All knowledge is with the King."

IV

Evening darkened and above the palace domes gleamed out the stars whereon haply others missed the secret too.

And outside the palace in the dark they that had borne the wine in jewelled cups mocked in low voices at the King and at the wisdom of his prophets.

Then spake Ynar, called the prophet of the Crystal Peak; for there rises Amanath above all that land, a mountain whose peak is crystal, and Ynar beneath its summit hath his Temple, and when day shines no longer on the world Amanath takes the sunlight and gleams afar as a beacon in a bleak land lit at night. And at the hour when all faces are turned on Amanath, Ynar comes forth beneath the Crystal peak to weave strange spells and to make signs that people say are surely for the gods. Therefore it is said in all those lands that Ynar speaks at evening to the gods when all the world is still.

And Ynar said:

"All knowledge is with the King, and without doubt it hath come to the King's ears how certain speech is held at evening on the Peak of Amanath.

"They that speak to me at evening on the Peak are They that live in a city through whose streets Death walketh not, and I have heard it from Their Elders that the King shall take no journey; only from thee the hills shall slip away, the dark woods, the sky and all the gleaming worlds that fill the night, and the green fields shall go on untrodden by thy feet and the blue sky ungazed at by thine eyes, and still the rivers shall all run seaward but making no music in thine ears. And all the old laments shall still be spoken, troubling thee not, and to the earth shall fall the tears of the children of earth and never grieving thee. Pestilence, heat and cold, ignorance, famine and

anger, these things shall grip their claws upon all men as heretofore in fields and roads and cities but shall not hold thee. But from thy soul, sitting in the old worn track of the worlds when all is gone away, shall fall off the shackles of circumstance and thou shalt dream thy dreams alone.

"And thou shalt find that dreams are real where there is nought as far as the Rim but only thy dreams and thee.

"With them thou shalt build palaces and cities resting upon nothing and having no place in time, not to be assailed by the hours or harmed by ivy or rust, not to be taken by conquerors, but destroyed by thy fancy if thou dost wish it so or by thy fancy rebuilded. And nought shall ever disturb these dreams of thine which here are troubled and lost by all the happenings of earth, as the dreams of one who sleeps in a tumultuous city. For these thy dreams shall sweep outward like a strong river over a great waste plain wherein are neither rocks nor hills to turn it, only in that place there shall be no boundaries nor sea, neither hindrance nor end. And it were well for thee that thou shouldst take few regrets into thy waste dominions from the world wherein thou livest, for such regrets or any memory of deeds ill done must sit beside thy soul forever in that waste, singing one song always of forlorn remorse; and they too shall be only dreams but very real.

"There nought shall hinder thee among thy dreams, for even the gods may harass thee no more when flesh and earth and events with which They bound thee shall have slipped away."

Then said the King:

"I like not this grey doom, for dreams are empty. I would see action roaring through the world, and men and deeds."

Then answered the Prophet:

"Victory, jewels and dancing but please thy fancy. What is the sparkle of the gem to thee without thy fancy which it allures, and thy fancy is all a dream. Action and deeds and men are nought without dreams and do but fetter them, and only dreams are real, and where thou stayest when the worlds shall drift away there shall be only dreams."

And the King answered:

"A mad prophet."

And Ynar said:

"A mad prophet, but believing that his soul possesseth all things of which his soul may become aware and that he is master of that soul, and thou a high-minded King believing only that thy soul possesseth such few

countries as are leaguered by thine armies and the sea, and that thy soul is possessed by certain strange gods of whom thou knowest not, who shall deal with it in a way whereof thou knowest not. Until a knowledge come to us that either is wrong I have wider realms, I King, than thee and hold them beneath no overlords."

Then said the King:

"Thou hast said no overlords! To whom then dost thou speak by strange signs at evening above the world?"

And Ynar went forward and whispered to the King. And the King shouted:

"Seize ye this prophet for he is a hypocrite and speaks to no gods at evening above the world, but has deceived us with his signs."

And Ynar said:

"Come not near me or I shall point towards you when I speak at evening upon the mountain with Those that ye know of."

Then Ynar went away and the guards touched him not.

V

Then spake the prophet Thun, who was clad in seaweed and had no Temple, but lived apart from men. All his life he had lived on a lonely beach and had heard for ever the wailing of the sea and the crying of the wind in hollows among the cliffs. Some said that having lived so long by the full beating of the sea, and where always the wind cries loudest, he could not feel the joys of other men, but only felt the sorrow of the sea crying in his soul for ever.

"Long ago on the path of stars, midmost between the worlds, there strode the gods of Old. In the bleak middle of the worlds They sat and the worlds went round and round, like dead leaves in the wind at Autumn's end, with never a life on one, while the gods went sighing for the things that might not be. And the centuries went over the gods to go where the centuries go, toward the End of Things, and with Them went the sighs of all the gods as They longed for what might not be.

"One by one in the midst of the worlds, fell dead the gods of Old, still sighing for the things that might not be, all slain by Their own regrets. Only Shimono Kani, the youngest of the gods, made him a harp out of the heart strings of all the elder gods, and, sitting upon the Path of Stars in the Middle of Things, played upon the harp a dirge for the gods of Old. And the song

told of all vain regrets and of unhappy loves of the gods in the olden time, and of Their great deeds that were to adorn the future years. But into the dirge of Shimono Kani came voices crying out of the heart strings of the gods, all sighing still for the things that might not be. And the dirge and the voices crying, go drifting away from the Path of Stars, away from the Midst of Things, till they come twittering among the Worlds, like a great host of birds that are lost by night. And every note is a life, and many notes become caught up among the worlds to be entangled with flesh for a little while before they pass again on their journey to the great Anthem that roars at the End of Time. Shimono Kani hath given a voice to the wind and added a sorrow to the sea. But when in lighted chambers after feasting there arises the voice of the singer to please the King, then is the soul of that singer crying aloud to his fellows from where he stands chained to earth. And when at the sound of the singing the heart of the King grows sad and his princes lament then they remember, though knowing not that, they remember it, the sad face of Shimono Kani sitting by his dead brethren, the elder gods, playing on the harp of crying heart strings whereby he sent their souls among the worlds.

"And when the music of one lute is lonely on the hills at night, then one soul calleth to his brother souls — the notes of Shimono Kani's dirge which have not been caught among the worlds — and he knoweth not to whom he calls or why, but knoweth only that minstrelsy is his only cry and sendeth it out into the dark.

"But although in the prison houses of earth all memories must die, yet as there sometimes clings to a prisoner's feet some dust of the fields wherein he was captured, so sometimes fragments of remembrance cling to a man's soul after it hath been taken to earth. Then a great minstrel arises, and, weaving together the shreds of his memories, maketh some melody such as the hand of Shimono Kani smites out of his harp; and they that pass by say: 'Hath there not been some such melody before?' and pass on sad at heart for memories which are not.

"Therefore, O King, one day the great gates of thy palace shall lie open for a procession wherein the King comes down to pass through a people, lamenting with lute and drum; and on the same day a prison door shall be opened by relenting hands, and one more lost note of Shimono Kani's dirge shall go back to swell his melody again.

“The dirge of Shimono Kani shall roll on till one day it shall come with all its notes complete to overwhelm the Silence that sits at the End of Things. Then shall Shimono Kani say to his brethren’s bones: The things that might not be have at last become.’

“But very quiet shall be the bones of the gods of Old, and only Their voices shall live which cried from the harp of heart strings, for the things which might not be.”

VI

When the caravans, saying farewell to Zandara, set out across the waste northwards towards Einandhu, they follow the desert track for seven days before they come to water where Shubah Onath rises black out of the waste, with a well at its foot and herbage on its summit. On this rock a prophet hath his Temple and is called the Prophet of Journeys, and hath carven in a southern window smiling along the camel track all gods that are benignant to caravans.

There a traveller may learn by prophecy whether he shall accomplish the ten days’ journey thence across the desert and so come to the white city of Einandhu, or whether his bones shall lie with the bones of old along the desert track.

No name hath the Prophet of Journeys, for none is needed in that desert where no man calls nor ever a man answers.

Thus spake the Prophet of Journeys standing before the King:

“The journey of the King shall be an old journey pushed on apace.

“Many a year before the making of the moon thou camest down with dream camels from the City without a name that stands beyond all the stars. And then began thy journey over the Waste of Nought, and thy dream camel bore thee well when those of certain of thy fellow travellers fell down in the Waste and were covered over by the silence and were turned again to nought; and those travellers when their dream camels fell, having nothing to carry them further over the Waste, were lost beyond and never found the earth. These are those men that might have been but were not. And all about thee fluttered the myriad hours travelling in great swarms across the Waste of Nought.

“How many centuries passed across the cities while thou wast making thy journey none may reckon, for there is no time in the Waste of Nought,

but only the hours fluttering earthwards from beyond to do the work of Time. At last the dream-borne travellers saw far off a green place gleaming and made haste towards it and so came to Earth. And there, O King, ye rest for a little while, thou and those that came with thee, making an encampment upon earth before journeying on. There the swarming hours alight, settling on every blade of grass and tree, and spreading over your tents and devouring all things, and at last bending your very tent poles with their weight and wearying you.

"Behind the encampment in the shadow of the tents lurks a dark figure with a nimble sword, having the name of Time. This is he that hath called the hours from beyond and he it is that is their master, and it is his work that the hours do as they devour all green things upon the earth and tatter the tents and weary all the travellers. As each of the hours does the work of Time, Time smites him with his nimble sword as soon as his work is done, and the hour falls severed to the dust with his bright wings scattered, as a locust cut asunder by the scimitar of a skillful swordsman.

"One by one, O King, with a stir in the camp, and the folding up of the tents one by one, the travellers shall push on again on the journey begun so long before out of the City without a name to the place where dream camels go, striding free through the Waste. So into the Waste, O King, thou shalt set forth ere long, perhaps to renew friendships begun during thy short encampment upon earth.

"Other green places thou shalt meet in the Waste and thereon shalt encamp again until driven thence by the hours. What prophet shall relate how many journeys thou shalt make or how many encampments? But at last thou shalt come to the place of The Resting of Camels, and there shall gleaming cliffs that are named The Ending of Journeys lift up out of the Waste of Nought, Nought at their feet, Nought laying wide before them, with only the glint of worlds far off to illumine the Waste. One by one, on tired dream camels, the travellers shall come in, and going up the pathway through the cliff in that land of The Resting of Camels shall come on The City of Ceasing. There, the dream-wrought pinnacles and the spires that are builded of men's hopes shall rise up real before thee, seen only hitherto as a mirage in the Waste.

"So far the swarming hours may not come, and far away among the tents shall stand the dark figure with the nimble sword. But in the scintillant

streets, under the song-built abodes of the last of cities, thy journey, O King, shall end."

VII

In the valley beyond Sidono there lies a garden of poppies, and where the poppies' heads are all a-swing with summer breezes that go up the valley there lies a path well strewn with ocean shells. Over Sidono's summit the birds come streaming to the lake that lies in the valley of the garden, and behind them rises the sun sending Sidono's shadow as far as the edge of the lake. And down the path of many ocean shells when they begin to gleam in the sun, every morning walks an aged man clad in a silken robe with strange devices woven. A little temple where the old man lives stands at the edge of the path. None worship there, for Zornadhu, the old prophet, hath forsaken men to walk among his poppies.

For Zornadhu hath failed to understand the purport of Kings and cities and the moving up and down of many people to the tune of the clinking of gold. Therefore hath Zornadhu gone far away from the sound of cities and from those that are ensnared thereby, and beyond Sidono's mountain hath come to rest where there are neither kings nor armies nor bartering for gold, but only the heads of the poppies that sway in the wind together and the birds that fly from Sidono to the lake, and then the sunrise over Sidono's summit; and afterwards the flight of birds out of the lake and over Sidono again, and sunset behind the valley, and high over lake and garden the stars that know not cities. There Zornadhu lives in his garden of poppies with Sidono standing between him and the whole world of men; and when the wind blowing athwart the valley sways the heads of the tall poppies against the Temple wall, the old prophet says: "The flowers are all praying, and lo! they be nearer to the gods than men."

But the heralds of the King coming after many days of travel to Sidono perceived the garden valley. By the lake they saw the poppy garden gleaming round and small like a sunrise over water on a misty morning seen by some shepherd from the hills. And descending the bare mountain for three days they came to the gaunt pines, and ever between the tall trunks came the glare of the poppies that shone from the garden valley. For a whole day they travelled through the pines. That night a cold wind came up the garden valley crying against the poppies. Low in his Temple, with a

song of exceeding grief, Zornadhu in the morning made a dirge for the passing of poppies, because in the night time there had fallen petals that might not return or ever come again into the garden valley. Outside the Temple on the path of ocean shells the heralds halted, and read the names and honours of the King; and from the Temple came the voice of Zornadhu still singing his lament. But they took him from his garden because of the King's command, and down his gleaming path of ocean shells and away up Sidono, and left the Temple empty with none to lament when silken poppies died. And the will of the wind of the autumn was wrought upon the poppies, and the heads of the poppies that rose from the earth went down to the earth again, as the plume of a warrior smitten in a heathen fight far away, where there are none to lament him. Thus out of his land of flowers went Zornadhu and came perforce into the lands of men, and saw cities, and in the city's midst stood up before the King.

And the King said:

"Zornadhu, what of the journey of the King and of the princes and the people that shall meet me?"

Zornadhu answered:

"I know nought of Kings, but in the night time the poppy made his journey a little before dawn. Thereafter the wildfowl came as is their wont over Sidono's summit, and the sun rising behind them gleamed upon Sidono, and all the flowers of the lake awoke. And the bee passing up and down the garden went droning to other poppies, and the flowers of the lake, they that had known the poppy, knew him no more. And the sun's rays slanting from Sidono's crest lit still a garden valley where one poppy waved his petals to the dawn no more. And I, O King, that down a path of gleaming ocean shells walk in the morning, found not, nor have since found, that poppy again, that hath gone on the journey whence there is not returning, out of my garden valley. And I, O King, made a dirge to cry beyond that valley and the poppies bowed their heads; but there is no cry nor no lament that may adjure the life to return again to a flower that grew in a garden once and hereafter is not.

"Unto what place the lives of poppies have gone no man shall truly say. Sure it is that to that place are only outward tracks. Only it may be that when a man dreams at evening in a garden where heavily the scent of poppies hangs in the air, when the winds have sunk, and far away the sound of a lute is heard on lonely hills, as he dreams of silken-scarlet poppies that

once were a-swing together in the gardens of his youth, the lives of those old lost poppies shall return, living again in his dream. *So there may dream the gods.* And through the dreams of some divinity reclining in tinted fields above the morning we may haply pass again, although our bodies have long swirled up and down the world with other dust. In these strange dreams our lives may be again, all in the centre of our hopes, rejoicings and laments, until above the morning the gods wake to go about their work, haply to remember still Their idle dreams, haply to dream them all again in the stillness when shines the starlight of the gods."

VIII

Then said the King: "I like not these strange journeys nor this faint wandering through the dreams of gods like the shadow of a weary camel that may not rest when the sun is low. The gods that have made me to love the earth's cool woods and dancing streams do ill to send me into the starry spaces that I love not, with my soul still peering earthward through the eternal years, as a beggar who once was noble staring from the street at lighted halls. For wherever the gods may send me I shall be as the gods have made me, a creature loving the green fields of earth.

"Now if there stand one prophet here that hath the ear of those too splendid gods that stride above the glories of the orient sky, tell them that there is on earth one King in the land called Zarkandhu to the south of the opal mountains, who would fain tarry among the many gardens of earth, and would leave to other men the splendours that the gods shall give the dead above the twilight that surrounds the stars."

Then spake Yamen, prophet of the Temple of Obin that stands on the shores of a great lake, facing east. Yamen said: "I pray oft to the gods who sit above the twilight behind the east. When the clouds are heavy and red at sunset, or when there is boding of thunder or eclipse, then I pray not, lest my prayers be scattered and beaten earthward. But when the sun sets in a tranquil sky, pale green or azure, and the light of his farewells stays long upon lonely hills, then I send forth my prayers to flutter upward to gods that are surely smiling, and the gods hear my prayers. But, O King, boons sought out of due time from the gods are never wholly to be desired, and, if They should grant to thee to tarry on the earth, old age would trouble thee

with burdens more and more till thou wouldst become the driven slave of the hours in fetters that none may break."

The King said: "They that have devised this burden of age may surely stay it, pray therefore on the calmest evening of the year to the gods above the twilight that I may tarry always on the earth and always young, while over my head the scourges of the gods pass and alight not."

Then answered Yamen: "The King hath commanded, yet among the blessings of the gods there always cries a curse. The great princes that make merry with the King, who tell of the great deeds that the King wrought in the former time, shall one by one grow old. And thou, O King, seated at the feast crying, 'make merry' and extolling the former time shall find about thee white heads nodding in sleep, and men that are forgetting the former time. Then one by one the names of those that sported with thee once called by the gods, one by one the names of the singers that sing the songs thou lovest called by the gods, lastly of those that chased the grey boar by night and took him in Orghoom river — only the King. Then a new people that have not known the old deeds of the King nor fought and chased with him, who dare not make merry with the King as did his long dead princes. And all the while those princes that are dead growing dearer and greater in thy memory, and all the while the men that served thee then growing more small to thee. And all the old things fading and new things arising which are not as the old things were, the world changing yearly before thine eyes and the gardens of thy childhood overgrown. Because thy childhood was in the olden years thou shalt love the olden years, but ever the new years shall overthrow them and their customs, and not the will of a King may stay the changes that the gods have planned for all the customs of old. Ever thou shalt say 'This was not so,' and ever the new custom shall prevail even against a King. When thou hast made merry a thousand times thou shalt grow tired of making merry. At last thou shalt become weary of the chase, and still old age shall not come near to thee to stifle desires that have been too oft fulfilled; then, O King, thou shalt be a hunter yearning for the chase but with nought to pursue that hath not been oft overcome. Old age shall come not to bury thine ambitions in a time when there is nought for thee to aspire to any more. Experience of many centuries shall make thee wise but hard and very sad, and thou shalt be a mind apart from thy fellows and curse them all for fools, and they shall not perceive thy wisdom because thy thoughts are not their thoughts and the gods that they have made are not the

gods of the olden time. No solace shall thy wisdom bring thee but only an increasing knowledge that thou knowest nought, and thou shalt feel as a wise man in a world of fools, or else as a fool in a world of wise men, when all men feel so sure and ever thy doubts increase. When all that spake with thee of thine old deeds are dead, those that saw them not shall speak of them again to thee; till one speaking to thee of thy deeds of valour add more than even a man should when speaking to a King, and thou shalt suddenly doubt whether these great deeds were; and there shall be none to tell thee, only the echoes of the voices of the gods still singing in thine ears when long ago They called the princes that were thy friends. And thou shalt hear the knowledge of the olden time most wrongly told and afterwards forgotten. Then many prophets shall arise claiming discovery of that old knowledge. Then thou shalt find that seeking knowledge is vain, as the chase is vain, as making merry is vain, as all things are vain. One day thou shalt find that it is vain to be a King. Greatly then will the acclamations of the people weary thee, till the time when people grow aweary of Kings. Then thou shalt know that thou hast been uprooted from thine olden time and set to live in uncongenial years, and jests all new to royal ears shall smite thee on the head like hailstones, when thou hast lost thy crown, when those to whose grandsires thou hadst granted to bring them as children to kiss the feet of the King shall mock at thee because thou hast not learnt to barter with gold.

"Not all the marvels of the future time shall atone to thee for those old memories that glow warmer and brighter every year as they recede into the ages that the gods have gathered. And always dreaming of thy long dead princes and of the great Kings of other kingdoms in the olden time thou shalt fail to see the grandeur to which a hurrying jesting people shall attain in that kingless age. Lastly, O King, thou shalt perceive men changing in a way that thou shalt not comprehend, knowing what thou canst not know, till thou shalt discover that these are men no more and a new race holds dominion over the earth whose forefathers were men. These shall speak to thee no more as they hurry upon a quest that thou shalt never understand, and thou shalt know that thou canst no longer take thy part in shaping destinies, but in a world of cities only pine for air and the waving grass again and the sound of a wind in trees. Then even this shall end with the shapes of the gods in the darkness gathering all lives but thine, when the

hills shall fling up earth's long stored heat back to the heavens again, when earth shall be old and cold, with nothing alive upon it but one King."

Then said the King: "Pray to those hard gods still, for those that have loved the earth with all its gardens and woods and singing streams will love earth still when it is old and cold and with all its gardens gone and all the purport of its being failed and nought but memories."

IX

Then spake Paharn, a prophet of the land of Hurn.

And Paharn said:

"There was one man that knew, but he stands not here."

And the King said:

"Is he further than my heralds might travel in the night if they went upon fleet horses?"

And the prophet answered:

"He is no further than thy heralds may well travel in the night, but further than they may return from in all the years. Out of this city there goes a valley wandering through all the world and opens out at last on the green land of Hurn. On the one side in the distance gleams the sea, and on the other side a forest, black and ancient, darkens the fields of Hurn; beyond the forest and the sea there is no more, saving the twilight and beyond that the gods. In the mouth of the valley sleeps the village of Rhistaun.

"Here I was born, and heard the murmur of the flocks and herds, and saw the tall smoke standing between the sky and the still roofs of Rhistaun, and learned that men might not go into the dark forest, and that beyond the forest and the sea was nought saving the twilight, and beyond that the gods. Often there came travellers from the world all down the winding valley, and spake with strange speech in Rhistaun and returned again up the valley going back to the world. Sometimes with bells and camels and men running on foot, Kings came down the valley from the world, but always the travellers returned by the valley again and none went further than the land of Hurn.

"And Kithneb also was born in the land of Hurn and tended the flocks with me, but Kithneb would not care to listen to the murmur of the flocks and herds and see the tall smoke standing between the roofs and the sky, but

needed to know how far from Hurn it was that the world met the twilight, and how far across the twilight sat the gods.

"And often Kithneb dreamed as he tended the flocks and herds, and when others slept he would wander near to the edge of the forest wherein men might not go. And the elders of the land of Hurn reproved Kithneb when he dreamed; yet Kithneb was still as other men and mingled with his fellows until the day of which I will tell thee, O King. For Kithneb was aged about a score of years, and he and I were sitting near the flocks, and he gazed long at the point where the dark forest met the sea at the end of the land of Hurn. But when night drove the twilight down under the forest we brought the flocks together to Rhistaun, and I went up the street between the houses to see four princes that had come down the valley from the world, and they were clad in blue and scarlet and wore plumes upon their heads, and they gave us in exchange for our sheep some gleaming stones which they told us were of great value on the word of princes. And I sold them three sheep, and Darniag sold them eight.

"But Kithneb came not with the others to the market place where the four princes stood, but went alone across the fields to the edge of the forest.

"And it was upon the next morning that the strange thing befell Kithneb; for I saw him in the morning coming from the fields, and I hailed him with the shepherd's cry wherewith we shepherds call to one another, and he answered not. Then I stopped and spake to him, and Kithneb said not a word till I became angry and left him.

"Then we spake together concerning Kithneb, and others had hailed him, and he had not answered them, but to one he had said that he had heard the voices of the gods speaking beyond the forest and so would never listen more to the voices of men.

"Then we said: 'Kithneb is mad,' and none hindered him.

"Another took his place among the flocks, and Kithneb sat in the evenings by the edge of the forest on the plain, alone.

"So Kithneb spake to none for many days, but when any forced him to speak he said that every evening he heard the gods when they came to sit in the forest from over the twilight and sea, and that he would speak no more with men.

"But as the months went by, men in Rhistaun came to look on Kithneb as a prophet, and we were wont to point to him when strangers came down the valley from the world, saying:

“‘Here in the land of Hurn we have a prophet such as you have not among your cities, for he speaks at evening with the gods.’

“A year had passed over the silence of Kithneb when he came to me and spake. And I bowed before him because we believed that he spake among the gods. And Kithneb said:

“‘I will speak to thee before the end because I am most lonely. For how may I speak again with men and women in the little streets of Rhistaun among the houses, when I have heard the voices of the gods singing above the twilight? But I am more lonely than ever Rhistaun wonts of, for this I tell thee, *when I hear the gods I know not what They say*. Well indeed I know the voice of each, for ever calling me away from contentment; well I know Their voices as they call to my soul and trouble it; I know by Their tone when They rejoice, and I know when They are sad, for even the gods feel sadness. I know when over fallen cities of the past, and the curved white bones of heroes They sing the dirges of the gods’ lament. But alas! Their words I know not, and the wonderful strains of the melody of Their speech beat on my soul and pass away unknown.

“‘Therefore I travelled from the land of Hurn till I came to the house of the prophet Arnin-Yo, and told him that I sought to find the meaning of the gods; and Arnin-Yo told me to ask the shepherds concerning all the gods, for what the shepherds knew it was meet for a man to know, and, beyond that, knowledge turned into trouble.

“‘But I told Arnin-Yo that I had heard myself the voices of the gods and knew that They were there beyond the twilight and so could never more bow down to the gods that the shepherds made from the red clay which they scooped with their hands out of the hillside.

“‘Then said Arnin-Yo to me:

“““Natheless forget that thou hast heard the gods and bow down again to the gods of the red clay that the shepherds make, and find thereby the ease that the shepherds find, and at last die, remembering devoutly the gods of the red clay that the shepherds scooped with their hands out of the hill. For the gifts of the gods that sit beyond the twilight and smile at the gods of clay, are neither ease nor contentment.”

“‘And I said:

“““The god that my mother made out of the red clay that she had got from the hill, fashioning it with many arms and eyes as she sang me songs

of its power, and told me stories of its mystic birth, this god is lost and broken; and ever in my ears is ringing the melody of the gods."

"'And Arnin-Yo said:

"""If thou wouldst still seek knowledge know that only those that come behind the gods may clearly know their meaning. And this thou canst only do by taking ship and putting out to sea from the land of Hurn and sailing up the coast towards the forest. There the sea cliffs turn to the left or southward, and full upon them beats the twilight from over the sea, and there thou mayest come round behind the forest. Here where the world's edge mingles with the twilight the gods come in the evening, and if thou canst come behind Them thou shalt hear Their voices clear, beating full seaward and filling all the twilight with sound of song, and thou shalt know the meaning of the gods. But where the cliffs turn southward there sits behind the gods Brimdono, the oldest whirlpool in the sea, roaring to guard his masters. Him the gods have chained for ever to the floor of the twilit sea to guard the door of the forest that lieth above the cliffs. Here, then, if thou canst hear the voices of the gods as thou hast said, thou wilt know their meaning clear, but this will profit thee little when Brimdono drags thee down and all thy ship.'"

"Thus spake Kithneb to me.

"But I said:

"'O Kithneb, forget those whirlpool-guarded gods beyond the forest, and if thy small god be lost thou shalt worship with me the small god that my mother made. Thousands of years ago he conquered cities but is not any longer an angry god. Pray to him, Kithneb, and he shall bring thee comfort and increase to thy flocks and a mild spring, and at the last a quiet ending for thy days.'

"But Kithneb heeded not, and only bade me find a fisher ship and men to row it. So on the next day we put forth from the land of Hurn in a boat that the fisher folk use. And with us came four of the fisher folk who rowed the boat while I held the rudder, but Kithneb sat and spake not in the prow. And we rowed westward up the coast till we came at evening where the cliffs turned southward and the twilight gleamed upon them and the sea.

"There we turned southwards and saw at once Brimdono. And as a man tears the purple cloak of a king slain in battle to divide it with other warriors, — Brimdono tore the sea. And ever around and around him with a gnarled hand Brimdono whirled the sail of some adventurous ship, the

trophy of some calamity wrought in his greed for shipwreck long ago where he sat to guard his masters from all who fare on the sea. And ever one far-reaching empty hand swung up and down so that we durst go no nearer.

"Only Kithneb neither saw Brimdono nor heard his roar, and when we would go no further bade us lower a small boat with oars out of the ship. Into this boat Kithneb descended, not heeding words from us, and onward rowed alone. A cry of triumph over ships and men Brimdono uttered before him, but Kithneb's eyes were turned toward the forest as he came behind the gods. Upon his face the twilight beat full from the haunts of evening to illumine the smiles that grew about his eyes as he came behind the gods. Him that had found the gods above Their twilit cliffs, him that had heard Their voices close at last and knew Their meaning clear, him, from the cheerless world with its doubtings and prophets that lie, from all hidden meanings, where truth rang clear at last, Brimdono took."

But when Paharn ceased to speak, in the King's ears the roar of Brimdono exulting over ancient triumphs and the whelming of ships seemed still to ring.

X

Then Mohontis spake, the hermit prophet, who lived in the deep untravelled woods that seclude Lake Ilana.

"I dreamed that to the west of all the seas I saw by vision the mouth of Munra-O, guarded by golden gates, and through the bars of the gates that guard the mysterious river of Munra-O I saw the flashes of golden barques, wherein the gods went up and down, and to and fro through the evening dusk. And I saw that Munra-O was a river of dreams such as came through remembered gardens in the night, to charm our infancy as we slept beneath the sloping gables of the houses of long ago. And Munra-O rolled down her dreams from the unknown inner land and slid them under the golden gates and out into the waste, unheeding sea, till they beat far off upon low-lying shores and murmured songs of long ago to the islands of the south, or shouted tumultuous paeans to the Northern crags; or cried forlornly against rocks where no one came, dreams that might not be dreamed.

"Many gods there be, that through the dusk of an evening in the summer go up and down this river. There I saw, in a high barque all of gold, gods the of the pomp of cities; there I saw gods of splendour, in boats bejewelled to

the keels; gods of magnificence and gods of power. I saw the dark ships and the glint of steel of the gods whose trade was war, and I heard the melody of the bells of silver arow in the rigging of harpstrings as the gods of melody went sailing through the dusk on the river of Munra — O. Wonderful river of Munra — O! I saw a grey ship with sails of the spider's web all lit with dewdrop lanterns, and on its prow was a scarlet cock with its wings spread far and wide when the gods of the dawn sailed also on Munra-O.

"Down this river it is the wont of the gods to carry the souls of men eastward to where the world in the distance faces on Munra-O. Then I knew that when the gods of the Pride of Power and gods of the Pomp of Cities went down the river in their tall gold ships to take earthward other souls, swiftly adown the river and between the ships had gone in this boat of birch bark the god Tarn, the hunter, bearing my soul to the world. And I know now that he came down the stream in the dusk keeping well to the middle, and that he moved silently and swiftly among the ships, wielding a twin-bladed oar. I remember, now, the yellow gleaming of the great boats of the gods of the Pomp of Cities, and the huge prow above me of the gods of the Pride of Power, when Tarn, dipping his right blade into the river, lifted his left blade high, and the drops gleamed and fell. Thus Tarn the hunter took me to the world that faces across the sea of the west on the gate of Munra-O. And so it was that there grew upon me the glamour of the hunt, though I had forgotten Tarn, and took me into mossy places and into dark woods, and I became the cousin of the wolf and looked into the lynx's eyes and knew the bear; and the birds called to me with half-remembered notes, and there grew in me a deep love of great rivers and of all western seas, and a distrust of cities, and all the while I had forgotten Tarn.

"I know not what high galleon shall come for thee, O King, nor what rowers, clad with purple, shall row at the bidding of gods when thou goest back with pomp to the river of Munra-O. But for me Tarn waits where the Seas of the West break over the edge of the world, and, as the years pass over me and the love of the chase sinks low, and as the glamour of the dark woods and mossy places dies down in my soul, ever louder and louder lap the ripples against the canoe of birch bark where, holding his twin-bladed oar, Tarn waits.

"But when my soul hath no more knowledge of the woods nor kindred any longer with the creatures of the dark, and when all that Tarn hath given it shall be lost, then Tarn shall take me back over the western seas, where all

the remembered years lie floating idly aswing with the ebb and flow, to bring me again to the river of Munra-O. Far up that river we shall haply chase those creatures whose eyes are peering in the night as they prowl around the world, for Tarn was ever a hunter."

XI

Then Ulf spake, the prophet who in Sistrameides lives in a temple anciently dedicated to the gods. Rumour hath guessed that there the gods walked once some time towards evening. But Time whose hand is against the temples of the gods hath dealt harshly with it and overturned its pillars and set upon its ruins his sign and seal: now Ulf dwells there alone. And Ulf said, "There sets, O King, a river outward from earth which meets with a mighty sea whose waters roll through space and fling their billows on the shores of every star. These are the river and the sea of the Tears of Men."

And the King said:

"Men have not written of this sea."

And the prophet answered:

"Have not tears enough burst in the night time out of sleeping cities? Have not the sorrows of 10,000 homes sent streams into this river when twilight fell and it was still and there was none to hear? Have there not been hopes, and were they all fulfilled? Have there not been conquests and bitter defeats? And have not flowers when spring was over died in the gardens of many children? Tears enough, O King, tears enough have gone down out of earth to make such a sea; and deep it is and wide and the gods know it and it flings its spray on the shores of all the stars. Down this river and across this sea thou shalt fare in a ship of sighs and all around thee over the sea shall fly the prayers of men which rise on white wings higher than their sorrows. Sometimes perched in the rigging, sometimes crying around thee, shall go the prayers that availed not to stay thee in Zarkandhu. Far over the waters, and on the wings of the prayers beats the light of an inaccessible star. No hand hath touched it, none hath journeyed to it, it hath no substance, it is only a light, it is the star of Hope, and it shines far over the sea and brightens the world. It is nought but a light, but the gods gave it.

"Led only by the light of this star the myriad prayers that thou shalt see all around thee fly to the Hall of the gods.

“Sighs shall waft thy ship of sighs over the sea of Tears. Thou shalt pass by islands of laughter and lands of song lying low in the sea, and all of them drenched with tears flung over their rocks by the waves of the sea all driven by the sighs.

“But at last thou shalt come with the prayers of men to the great Hall of the gods where the chairs of the gods are carved of onyx grouped round the golden throne of the eldest of the gods. And there, O King, hope not to find the gods, but reclining upon the golden throne wearing a cloak of his master’s thou shalt see the figure of Time with blood upon his hands, and loosely dangling from his fingers a dripping sword, and spattered with blood but empty shall stand the onyx chairs.

“There he sits on his master’s throne dangling idly his sword, or with it flicking cruelly at the prayers of men that lie in a great heap bleeding at his feet.

“For a while, O King, the gods had sought to solve the riddles of Time, for a while They made him Their slave, and Time smiled and obeyed his masters, for a while, O King, for a while. He that hath spared nothing hath not spared the gods, nor yet shall he spare thee.”

Then the King spake dolefully in the Hall of Kings, and said:

“May I not find at last the gods, and must it be that I may not look in Their faces at the last to see whether They be kindly? They that have sent me on my earthward journey I would greet on my returning, if not as a King coming again to his own city, yet as one who having been ordered had obeyed, and obeying had merited something of those for whom he toiled. I would look Them in Their faces, O prophet, and ask Them concerning many things and would know the wherefore of much. I had hoped, O prophet, that those gods that had smiled upon my childhood, Whose voices stirred at evening in gardens when I was young, would hold dominion still when at last I came to seek Them. O prophet, if this is not to be, make you a great dirge for my childhood’s gods and fashion silver bells and, setting them mostly a-swing amidst such trees as grew in the garden of my childhood, sing you this dirge in the dusk: and sing it when the low moth flies up and down and the bat first comes peering from her home, sing it when white mists come rising from the river, when smoke is pale and grey, while flowers are yet closing, ere voices are yet hushed, sing it while all things yet lament the day, or ever the great lights of heaven come blazing forth and night with her splendours takes the place of day. For, if the old

gods die, let us lament Them or ever new knowledge comes, while all the world still shudders at Their loss.

"For at the last, O prophet, what is left? Only the gods of my childhood dead, and only Time striding large and lonely through the spaces, chilling the moon and paling the light of stars and scattering earthward out of both his hands the dust of forgetfulness over the fields of heroes and smitten Temples of the older gods."

But when the other prophets heard with what doleful words the King spake in the Hall they all cried out:

"It is not as Ulf has said but as I have said — and I."

Then the King pondered long, not speaking. But down in the city in a street between the houses stood grouped together they that were wont to dance before the King, and they that had borne his wine in jewelled cups. Long they had tarried in the city hoping that the King might relent, and once again regard them with kindly faces calling for wine and song. The next morning they were all to set out in search of some new Kingdom, and they were peering between the houses and up the long grey street to see for the last time the palace of King Ebalon; and Pattering Leaves, the dancer, cried:

"Not any more, not any more at all shall we drift up the carven hall to dance before the King. He that now watches the magic of his prophets will behold no more the wonder of the dance, and among ancient parchments, strange and wise, he shall forget the swirl of drapery when we swing together through the Dance of the Myriad Steps."

And with her were Silvern Fountain and Summer Lightning and Dream of the Sea, each lamenting that they should dance no more to please the eyes of the King.

And Intahn who had carried at the banquet for fifty years the goblet of the King set with its four sapphires each as large as an eye, said as he spread his hands towards the palace making the sign of farewell:

"Not all the magic of prophecy nor yet foreseeing nor perceiving may equal the power of wine. Through the small door in the King's Hall one goes by one hundred steps and many sloping corridors into the cool of the earth where lies a cavern vaster than the Hall. Therein, curtained by the spider, repose the casks of wine that are wont to gladden the hearts of the Kings of Zarkandhu. In islands far to the eastward the vine, from whose heart this wine was long since wrung, hath climbed aloft with many a

clutching finger and beheld the sea and ships of the olden time and men since dead, and gone down into the earth again and been covered over with weeds. And green with the damp of years there lie three casks that a city gave not up until all her defenders were slain and her houses fired; and ever to the soul of that wine is added a more ardent fire as ever the years go by. Thither it was my pride to go before a banquet in the olden years, and coming up to bear in the sapphire goblet the fire of the elder Kings and to watch the King's eye flash and his face grow nobler and more like his sires as he drank the gleaming wine.

"And now the King seeks wisdom from his prophets while all the glory of the past and all the clattering splendour of today grows old, far down, forgotten beneath his feet."

And when he ceased the cupbearers and the women that danced looked long in silence at the palace. Then one by one all made the farewell sign before they turned to go, and as they did this a herald unseen in the dark was speeding towards them.

After a long silence the King spake:

"Prophets of my Kingdom," he said, "you have not prophesied alike, and the words of each prophet condemn his fellows' words so that wisdom may not be discovered among prophets. But I command that none in my Kingdom shall doubt that the earliest King of Zarkandhu stored wine beneath this palace before the building of the city or ever the palace arose, and I shall cause commands to be uttered for the making of a banquet at once within this Hall, so that ye shall perceive that the power of my wine is greater than all your spells, and dancing more wondrous than prophecy."

The dancers and the winebearers were summoned back, and as the night wore on a banquet was spread and all the prophets bidden to be seated, Samahn, Ynath, Monith, Ynar Thun, the prophet of Journeys, Zornadhu, Yamen, Paharn, Ilana, Ulf, and one that had not spoken nor yet revealed his name, and who wore his prophet's cloak across his face.

And the prophets feasted as they were commanded and spake as other men spake, save he whose face was hidden, who neither ate nor spake. Once he put out his hand from under his cloak and touched a blossom among the flowers upon the table and the blossom fell.

And Pattering Leaves came in and danced again, and the King smiled, and Pattering Leaves was happy though she had not the wisdom of the prophets. And in and out, in and out, in and out among the columns of the

Hall went Summer Lightning in the maze of the dance. And Silvern Fountain bowed before the King and danced and danced and bowed again, and old Intahn went to and fro from the cavern to the King gravely through the midst of the dancers but with kindly eyes, and when the King had often drunk of the old wine of the elder Kings he called for Dream of the Sea and bade her sing. And Dream of the Sea came through the arches and sang of an island builded by magic out of pearls, that lay set in a ruby sea, and how it lay far off and under the south, guarded by jagged reefs whereon the sorrows of the world were wrecked and never came to the island. And how a low sunset always reddened the sea and lit the magic isle and never turned to night, and how someone sang always and endlessly to lure the soul of a King who might by enchantment pass the guarding reefs to find rest on the pearl island and not be troubled more, but only see sorrows on the outer reef battered and broken. Then Soul of the South rose up and sang a song of a fountain that ever sought to reach the sky and was ever doomed to fall to the earth again until at last….

Then whether it was the art of Pattering Leaves or the song of Dream of the Sea, or whether it was the fire of the wine of the elder Kings, Ebalon bade farewell kindly to the prophets when morning paled the stars. Then along the torchlit corridors the King went to his chamber, and having shut the door in the empty room, beheld suddenly a figure wearing the cloak of a prophet; and the King perceived that it was he whose face was hidden at the banquet, who had not revealed his name.

And the King said:

"Art thou, too, a prophet?"

And the figure answered:

"I am a prophet."

And the King said: "Knowest *thou* aught concerning the journey of the King?" And the figure answered: "I know, but have never said."

And the King said: "Who art thou that knowest so much and has not told it?"

And he answered:

"I am *The End*."

Then the cloaked figure strode away from the palace; and the King, unseen by the guards, followed upon his journey.

THE END

THE SWORD OF WELLERAN AND OTHER STORIES



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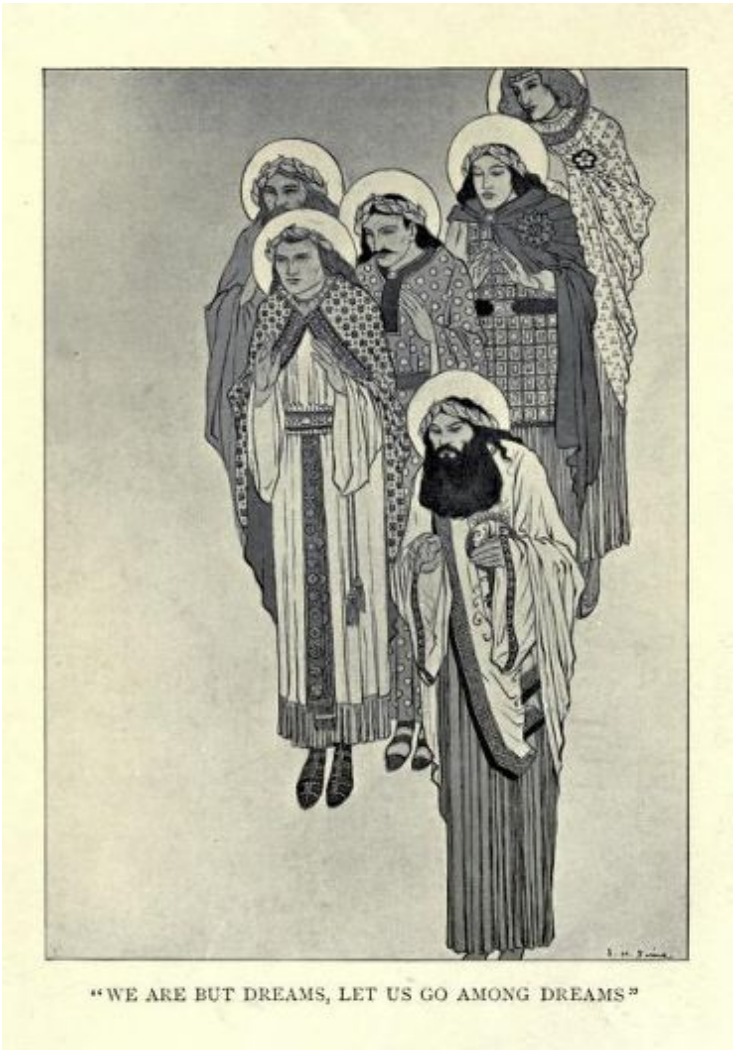
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The original frontispiece

DEDICATED

with deep gratitude to those few, known to me or unknown, who have cared for either of my former books, “The Gods of Pegana,” “Time and the Gods.”

THE SWORD OF WELLERAN

Where the great plain of Tarphet runs up, as the sea in estuaries, among the Cyresian mountains, there stood long since the city of Merimna well-nigh among the shadows of the crags. I have never seen a city in the world so beautiful as Merimna seemed to me when first I dreamed of it. It was a marvel of spires and figures of bronze, and marble fountains, and trophies of fabulous wars, and broad streets given over wholly to the Beautiful. Right through the centre of the city there went an avenue fifty strides in width, and along each side of it stood likenesses in bronze of the Kings of all the countries that the people of Merimna had ever known. At the end of that avenue was a colossal chariot with three bronze horses driven by the winged figure of Fame, and behind her in the chariot the huge form of Welleran, Merimna's ancient hero, standing with extended sword. So urgent was the mien and attitude of Fame, and so swift the pose of the horses, that you had sworn that the chariot was instantly upon you, and that its dust already veiled the faces of the Kings. And in the city was a mighty hall wherein were stored the trophies of Merimna's heroes. Sculptured it was and domed, the glory of the art of masons a long while dead, and on the summit of the dome the image of Rollory sat gazing across the Cyresian mountains towards the wide lands beyond, the lands that knew his sword. And beside Rollory, like an old nurse, the figure of Victory sat, hammering into a golden wreath of laurels for his head the crowns of fallen Kings.

Such was Merimna, a city of sculptured Victories and warriors of bronze. Yet in the time of which I write the art of war had been forgotten in Merimna, and the people almost slept. To and fro and up and down they would walk through the marble streets, gazing at memorials of the things achieved by their country's swords in the hands of those that long ago had loved Merimna well. Almost they slept, and dreamed of Welleran, Soorenard, Mommolek, Rollory, Akanax, and young Iraine. Of the lands beyond the mountains that lay all round about them they knew nothing, save that they were the theatre of the terrible deeds of Welleran, that he had done with his sword. Long since these lands had fallen back into the possession of the nations that had been scourged by Merimna's armies. Nothing now remained to Merimna's men save their inviolate city and the glory of the remembrance of their ancient fame. At night they would place

sentinels far out in the desert, but these always slept at their posts dreaming of Rollory, and three times every night a guard would march around the city clad in purple, bearing lights and singing songs of Welleran. Always the guard went unarmed, but as the sound of their song went echoing across the plain towards the looming mountains, the desert robbers would hear the name of Welleran and steal away to their haunts. Often dawn would come across the plain, shimmering marvellously upon Merimna's spires, abashing all the stars, and find the guard still singing songs of Welleran, and would change the colour of their purple robes and pale the lights they bore. But the guard would go back leaving the ramparts safe, and one by one the sentinels in the plain would awake from dreaming of Rollory and shuffle back into the city quite cold. Then something of the menace would pass away from the faces of the Cyresian mountains, that from the north and the west and the south lowered upon Merimna, and clear in the morning the statues and the pillars would arise in the old inviolate city. You would wonder that an unarmed guard and sentinels that slept could defend a city that was stored with all the glories of art, that was rich in gold and bronze, a haughty city that had erst oppressed its neighbours, whose people had forgotten the art of war. Now this is the reason that, though all her other lands had long been taken from her, Merimna's city was safe. A strange thing was believed or feared by the fierce tribes beyond the mountains, and it was credited among them that at certain stations round Merimna's ramparts there still rode Welleran, Soorenard, Mommolek, Rollory, Akanax, and young Iraine. Yet it was close on a hundred years since Iraine, the youngest of Merimna's heroes, fought his last battle with the tribes.

Sometimes indeed there arose among the tribes young men who doubted and said: 'How may a man for ever escape death?'

But graver men answered them: 'Hear us, ye whose wisdom has discerned so much, and discern for us how a man may escape death when two score horsemen assail him with their swords, all of them sworn to kill him, and all of them sworn upon their country's gods; as often Welleran hath. Or discern for us how two men alone may enter a walled city by night, and bring away from it that city's king, as did Soorenard and Mommolek. Surely men that have escaped so many swords and so many sleety arrows shall escape the years and Time.'

And the young men were humbled and became silent. Still, the suspicion grew. And often when the sun set on the Cyresian mountains, men in

Merimna discerned the forms of savage tribesmen black against the light, peering towards the city.

All knew in Merimna that the figures round the ramparts were only statues of stone, yet even there a hope lingered among a few that some day their old heroes would come again, for certainly none had ever seen them die. Now it had been the wont of these six warriors of old, as each received his last wound and knew it to be mortal, to ride away to a certain deep ravine and cast his body in, as somewhere I have read great elephants do, hiding their bones away from lesser beasts. It was a ravine steep and narrow even at the ends, a great cleft into which no man could come by any path. There rode Welleran alone, panting hard; and there later rode Soorenard and Mommolek, Mommolek with a mortal wound upon him not to return, but Soorenard was unwounded and rode back alone from leaving his dear friend resting among the mighty bones of Welleran. And there rode Soorenard, when his day was come, with Rollory and Akanax, and Rollory rode in the middle and Soorenard and Akanax on either side. And the long ride was a hard and weary thing for Soorenard and Akanax, for they both had mortal wounds; but the long ride was easy for Rollory, for he was dead. So the bones of these five heroes whitened in an enemy's land, and very still they were, though they had troubled cities, and none knew where they lay saving only Iraine, the young captain, who was but twenty-five when Mommolek, Rollory, and Akanax rode away. And among them were strewn their saddles and their bridles, and all the accoutrements of their horses, lest any man should ever find them afterwards and say in some foreign city: 'Lo! the bridles or the saddles of Merimna's captains, taken in war,' but their beloved trusty horses they turned free.

Forty years afterwards, in the hour of a great victory, his last wound came upon Iraine, and the wound was terrible and would not close. And Iraine was the last of the captains, and rode away alone. It was a long way to the dark ravine, and Iraine feared that he would never come to the resting-place of the old heroes, and he urged his horse on swiftly, and clung to the saddle with his hands. And often as he rode he fell asleep, and dreamed of earlier days, and of the times when he first rode forth to the great wars of Welleran, and of the time when Welleran first spake to him, and of the faces of Welleran's comrades when they led charges in the battle. And ever as he awoke a great longing arose in his soul as it hovered on his body's brink, a longing to lie among the bones of the old heroes. At last

when he saw the dark ravine making a scar across the plain, the soul of Iraine slipped out through his great wound and spread its wings, and pain departed from the poor hacked body, and, still urging his horse forward, Iraine died. But the old true horse cantered on till suddenly he saw before him the dark ravine and put his forefeet out on the very edge of it and stopped. Then the body of Iraine came toppling forward over the right shoulder of the horse, and his bones mingle and rest as the years go by with the bones of Merimna's heroes.

Now there was a little boy in Merimna named Rold. I saw him first, I, the dreamer, that sit before my fire asleep, I saw him first as his mother led him through the great hall where stand the trophies of Merimna's heroes. He was five years old, and they stood before the great glass casket wherein lay the sword of Welleran, and his mother said: 'The sword of Welleran.' And Rold said: 'What should a man do with the sword of Welleran?' And his mother answered: 'Men look at the sword and remember Welleran.' And they went on and stood before the great red cloak of Welleran, and the child said: 'Why did Welleran wear this great red cloak?' And his mother answered: 'It was the way of Welleran.'

When Rold was a little older he stole out of his mother's house quite in the middle of the night when all the world was still, and Merimna asleep dreaming of Welleran, Soorenard, Mommolek, Rollory, Akanax, and young Iraine. And he went down to the ramparts to hear the purple guard go by singing of Welleran. And the purple guard came by with lights, all singing in the stillness, and dark shapes out in the desert turned and fled. And Rold went back again to his mother's house with a great yearning towards the name of Welleran, such as men feel for very holy things.

And in time Rold grew to know the pathway all round the ramparts, and the six equestrian statues that were there guarding Merimna still. These statues were not like other statues, they were so cunningly wrought of many-coloured marbles that none might be quite sure until very close that they were not living men. There was a horse of dappled marble, the horse of Akanax. The horse of Rollory was of alabaster, pure white, his armour was wrought out of a stone that shone, and his horseman's cloak was made of a blue stone, very precious. He looked northwards.

But the marble horse of Welleran was pure black, and there sat Welleran upon him looking solemnly westwards. His horse it was whose cold neck Rold most loved to stroke, and it was Welleran whom the watchers at sunset

on the mountains the most clearly saw as they peered towards the city. And Rold loved the red nostrils of the great black horse and his rider's jasper cloak.

Now beyond the Cyresians the suspicion grew that Merimna's heroes were dead, and a plan was devised that a man should go by night and come close to the figures upon the ramparts and see whether they were Welleran, Soorenard, Mommolek, Rollory, Akanax, and young Iraine. And all were agreed upon the plan, and many names were mentioned of those who should go, and the plan matured for many years. It was during these years that watchers clustered often at sunset upon the mountains but came no nearer. Finally, a better plan was made, and it was decided that two men who had been by chance condemned to death should be given a pardon if they went down into the plain by night and discovered whether or not Merimna's heroes lived. At first the two prisoners dared not go, but after a while one of them, Seejar, said to his companion, Sajar-Ho: 'See now, when the King's axeman smites a man upon the neck that man dies.'

And the other said that this was so. Then said Seejar: 'And even though Welleran smite a man with his sword no more befalleth him than death.'

Then Sajar-Ho thought for a while. Presently he said: 'Yet the eye of the King's axeman might err at the moment of his stroke or his arm fail him, and the eye of Welleran hath never erred nor his arm failed. It were better to bide here.'

Then said Seejar: 'Maybe that Welleran is dead and that some other holds his place upon the ramparts, or even a statue of stone.'

But Sajar-Ho made answer: 'How can Welleran be dead when he even escaped from two score horsemen with swords that were sworn to slay him, and all sworn upon our country's gods?'

And Seejar said: 'This story his father told my grandfather concerning Welleran. On the day that the fight was lost on the plains of Kurlistan he saw a dying horse near to the river, and the horse looked piteously towards the water but could not reach it. And the father of my grandfather saw Welleran go down to the river's brink and bring water from it with his own hand and give it to the horse. Now we are in as sore a plight as was that horse, and as near to death; it may be that Welleran will pity us, while the King's axeman cannot because of the commands of the King.'

Then said Sajar-Ho: 'Thou wast ever a cunning arguer. Thou broughtest us into this trouble with thy cunning and thy devices, we will see if thou

canst bring us out of it. We will go.'

So news was brought to the King that the two prisoners would go down to Merimna.

That evening the watchers led them to the mountain's edge, and Seejar and Sajar-Ho went down towards the plain by the way of a deep ravine, and the watchers watched them go. Presently their figures were wholly hid in the dusk. Then night came up, huge and holy, out of waste marshes to the eastwards and low lands and the sea; and the angels that watched over all men through the day closed their great eyes and slept, and the angels that watched over all men through the night awoke and ruffled their deep blue feathers and stood up and watched. But the plain became a thing of mystery filled with fears. So the two spies went down the deep ravine, and coming to the plain sped stealthily across it. Soon they came to the line of sentinels asleep upon the sand, and one stirred in his sleep calling on Rollory, and a great dread seized upon the spies and they whispered 'Rollory lives,' but they remembered the King's axeman and went on. And next they came to the great bronze statue of Fear, carved by some sculptor of the old glorious years in the attitude of flight towards the mountains, calling to her children as she fled. And the children of Fear were carved in the likeness of the armies of all the trans-Cyresian tribes with their backs towards Merimna, flocking after Fear. And from where he sat on his horse behind the ramparts the sword of Welleran was stretched out over their heads as ever it was wont. And the two spies kneeled down in the sand and kissed the huge bronze foot of the statue of Fear, saying: 'O Fear, Fear.' And as they knelt they saw lights far off along the ramparts coming nearer and nearer, and heard men singing of Welleran. And the purple guard came nearer and went by with their lights, and passed on into the distance round the ramparts still singing of Welleran. And all the while the two spies clung to the foot of the statue, muttering: 'O Fear, Fear.' But when they could hear the name of Welleran no more they arose and came to the ramparts and climbed over them and came at once upon the figure of Welleran, and they bowed low to the ground, and Seejar said: 'O Welleran, we came to see whether thou didst yet live.' And for a long while they waited with their faces to the earth. At last Seejar looked up towards Welleran's terrible sword, and it was still stretched out pointing to the carved armies that followed after Fear. And Seejar bowed to the ground again and touched the horse's hoof, and it seemed cold to him. And he moved his hand higher and touched the leg of

the horse, and it seemed quite cold. At last he touched Welleran's foot, and the armour on it seemed hard and stiff. Then as Welleran moved not and spake not, Seejar climbed up at last and touched his hand, the terrible hand of Welleran, and it was marble. Then Seejar laughed aloud, and he and Sajar-Ho sped down the empty pathway and found Rollory, and he was marble too. Then they climbed down over the ramparts and went back across the plain, walking contemptuously past the figure of Fear, and heard the guard returning round the ramparts for the third time, singing of Welleran; and Seejar said: 'Ay, you may sing of Welleran, but Welleran is dead and a doom is on your city.'

And they passed on and found the sentinel still restless in the night and calling on Rollory. And Sajar-Ho muttered: 'Ay, you may call on Rollory, but Rollory is dead and naught can save your city.'

And the two spies went back alive to their mountains again, and as they reached them the first ray of the sun came up red over the desert behind Merimna and lit Merimna's spires. It was the hour when the purple guard were wont to go back into the city with their tapers pale and their robes a brighter colour, when the cold sentinels came shuffling in from dreaming in the desert; it was the hour when the desert robbers hid themselves away, going back to their mountain caves; it was the hour when gauze-winged insects are born that only live for a day; it was the hour when men die that are condemned to death; and in this hour a great peril, new and terrible, arose for Merimna and Merimna knew it not.

Then Seejar turning said: 'See how red the dawn is and how red the spires of Merimna. They are angry with Merimna in Paradise and they bode its doom.'

So the two spies went back and brought the news to their King, and for a few days the Kings of those countries were gathering their armies together; and one evening the armies of four Kings were massed together at the top of the deep ravine, all crouching below the summit waiting for the sun to set. All wore resolute and fearless faces, yet inwardly every man was praying to his gods, unto each one in turn.

Then the sun set, and it was the hour when the bats and the dark creatures are abroad and the lions come down from their lairs, and the desert robbers go into the plains again, and fevers rise up winged and hot out of chill marshes, and it was the hour when safety leaves the thrones of Kings, the hour when dynasties change. But in the desert the purple guard

came swinging out of Merimna with their lights to sing of Welleran, and the sentinels lay down to sleep.

Now into Paradise no sorrow may ever come, but may only beat like rain against its crystal walls, yet the souls of Merimna's heroes were half aware of some sorrow far away as some sleeper feels that some one is chilled and cold yet knows not in his sleep that it is he. And they fretted a little in their starry home. Then unseen there drifted earthward across the setting sun the souls of Welleran, Soorenard, Mommolek, Rollory, Akanax, and young Iraine. Already when they reached Merimna's ramparts it was just dark, already the armies of the four Kings had begun to move, jingling, down the deep ravine. But when the six warriors saw their city again, so little changed after so many years, they looked towards her with a longing that was nearer to tears than any that their souls had known before, crying to her:

'O Merimna, our city: Merimna, our walled city.

'How beautiful thou art with all thy spires, Merimna. For thee we left the earth, its kingdoms and little flowers, for thee we have come away for awhile from Paradise.

'It is very difficult to draw away from the face of God — it is like a warm fire, it is like dear sleep, it is like a great anthem, yet there is a stillness all about it, a stillness full of lights.

'We have left Paradise for awhile for thee, Merimna.

'Many women have we loved, Merimna, but only one city.

'Behold now all the people dream, all our loved people. How beautiful are dreams! In dreams the dead may live, even the long dead and the very silent. Thy lights are all sunk low, they have all gone out, no sound is in thy streets. Hush! Thou art like a maiden that shutteth up her eyes and is asleep, that draweth her breath softly and is quite still, being at ease and untroubled.

'Behold now the battlements, the old battlements. Do men defend them still as we defended them? They are worn a little, the battlements,' and drifting nearer they peered anxiously. 'It is not by the hand of man that they are worn, our battlements. Only the years have done it and indomitable Time. Thy battlements are like the girdle of a maiden, a girdle that is round about her. See now the dew upon them, they are like a jewelled girdle.

'Thou art in great danger, Merimna, because thou art so beautiful. Must thou perish tonight because we no more defend thee, because we cry out

and none hear us, as the bruised lilies cry out and none have known their voices?'

Thus spake those strong-voiced, battle-ordering captains, calling to their dear city, and their voices came no louder than the whispers of little bats that drift across the twilight in the evening. Then the purple guard came near, going round the ramparts for the first time in the night, and the old warriors called to them, 'Merimna is in danger! Already her enemies gather in the darkness.' But their voices were never heard because they were only wandering ghosts. And the guard went by and passed unheeding away, still singing of Welleran.

Then said Welleran to his comrades: 'Our hands can hold swords no more, our voices cannot be heard, we are stalwart men no longer. We are but dreams, let us go among dreams. Go all of you, and thou too, young Iraine, and trouble the dreams of all the men that sleep, and urge them to take the old swords of their grandsires that hang upon the walls, and to gather at the mouth of the ravine; and I will find a leader and make him take my sword.'

Then they passed up over the ramparts and into their dear city. And the wind blew about, this way and that, as he went, the soul of Welleran who had upon his day withstood the charges of tempestuous armies. And the souls of his comrades, and with them young Iraine, passed up into the city and troubled the dreams of every man who slept, and to every man the souls said in their dreams: 'It is hot and still in the city. Go out now into the desert, into the cool under the mountains, but take with thee the old sword that hangs upon the wall for fear of the desert robbers.'

And the god of that city sent up a fever over it, and the fever brooded over it and the streets were hot; and all that slept awoke from dreaming that it would be cool and pleasant where the breezes came down the ravine out of the mountains; and they took the old swords that their grandsires had, according to their dreams, for fear of the desert robbers. And in and out of dreams passed the souls of Welleran's comrades, and with them young Iraine, in great haste as the night wore on; and one by one they troubled the dreams of all Merimna's men and caused them to arise and go out armed, all save the purple guard who, heedless of danger, sang of Welleran still, for waking men cannot hear the souls of the dead.

But Welleran drifted over the roofs of the city till he came to the form of Rold lying fast asleep. Now Rold was grown strong and was eighteen years

of age, and he was fair of hair and tall like Welleran, and the soul of Welleran hovered over him and went into his dreams as a butterfly flits through trellis-work into a garden of flowers, and the soul of Welleran said to Rold in his dreams: ‘Thou wouldst go and see again the sword of Welleran, the great curved sword of Welleran. Thou wouldst go and look at it in the night with the moonlight shining upon it.’

And the longing of Rold in his dreams to see the sword caused him to walk still sleeping from his mother’s house to the hall wherein were the trophies of the heroes. And the soul of Welleran urging the dreams of Rold caused him to pause before the great red cloak, and there the soul said among the dreams: ‘Thou art cold in the night; fling now a cloak around thee.’

And Rold drew round about him the huge red cloak of Welleran. Then Rold’s dreams took him to the sword, and the soul said to the dreams: ‘Thou hast a longing to hold the sword of Welleran: take up the sword in thy hand.’

But Rold said: ‘What should a man do with the sword of Welleran?’

And the soul of the old captain said to the dreams: ‘It is a good sword to hold: take up the sword of Welleran.’

And Rold, still sleeping and speaking aloud, said: ‘It is not lawful; none may touch the sword.’

And Rold turned to go. Then a great and terrible cry arose in the soul of Welleran, all the more bitter for that he could not utter it, and it went round and round his soul finding no utterance, like a cry evoked long since by some murderous deed in some old haunted chamber that whispers through the ages heard by none.

And the soul of Welleran cried out to the dreams of Rold: ‘Thy knees are tied! Thou art fallen in a marsh! Thou canst not move.’

And the dreams of Rold said to him: ‘Thy knees are tied, thou art fallen in a marsh,’ and Rold stood still before the sword. Then the soul of the warrior wailed among Rold’s dreams, as Rold stood before the sword.

‘Welleran is crying for his sword, his wonderful curved sword. Poor Welleran, that once fought for Merimna, is crying for his sword in the night. Thou wouldst not keep Welleran without his beautiful sword when he is dead and cannot come for it, poor Welleran who fought for Merimna.’

And Rold broke the glass casket with his hand and took the sword, the great curved sword of Welleran; and the soul of the warrior said among

Rold's dreams: 'Welleran is waiting in the deep ravine that runs into the mountains, crying for his sword.'

And Rold went down through the city and climbed over the ramparts, and walked with his eyes wide open but still sleeping over the desert to the mountains.

Already a great multitude of Merimna's citizens were gathered in the desert before the deep ravine with old swords in their hands, and Rold passed through them as he slept holding the sword of Welleran, and the people cried in amaze to one another as he passed: 'Rold hath the sword of Welleran!'

And Rold came to the mouth of the ravine, and there the voices of the people woke him. And Rold knew nothing that he had done in his sleep, and looked in amazement at the sword in his hand and said: 'What art thou, thou beautiful thing? Lights shimmer in thee, thou art restless. It is the sword of Welleran, the curved sword of Welleran!'

And Rold kissed the hilt of it, and it was salt upon his lips with the battle-sweat of Welleran. And Rold said: 'What should a man do with the sword of Welleran?'

And all the people wondered at Rold as he sat there with the sword in his hand muttering, 'What should a man do with the sword of Welleran?'

Presently there came to the ears of Rold the noise of a jingling up in the ravine, and all the people, the people that knew naught of war, heard the jingling coming nearer in the night; for the four armies were moving on Merimna and not yet expecting an enemy. And Rold gripped upon the hilt of the great curved sword, and the sword seemed to lift a little. And a new thought came into the hearts of Merimna's people as they gripped their grandsires' swords. Nearer and nearer came the heedless armies of the four Kings, and old ancestral memories began to arise in the minds of Merimna's people in the desert with their swords in their hands sitting behind Rold. And all the sentinels were awake holding their spears, for Rollory had put their dreams to flight, Rollory that once could put to flight armies and now was but a dream struggling with other dreams.

And now the armies had come very near. Suddenly Rold leaped up, crying: 'Welleran! And the sword of Welleran!' And the savage, lusting sword that had thirsted for a hundred years went up with the hand of Rold and swept through a tribesman's ribs. And with the warm blood all about it there came a joy into the curved soul of that mighty sword, like to the joy of

a swimmer coming up dripping out of warm seas after living for long in a dry land. When they saw the red cloak and that terrible sword a cry ran through the tribal armies, ‘Welleran lives!’ And there arose the sounds of the exulting of victorious men, and the panting of those that fled, and the sword singing softly to itself as it whirled dripping through the air. And the last that I saw of the battle as it poured into the depth and darkness of the ravine was the sword of Welleran sweeping up and falling, gleaming blue in the moonlight whenever it arose and afterwards gleaming red, and so disappearing into the darkness.

But in the dawn Merimna’s men came back, and the sun arising to give new life to the world, shone instead upon the hideous things that the sword of Welleran had done. And Rold said: ‘O sword, sword! How horrible thou art! Thou art a terrible thing to have come among men. How many eyes shall look upon gardens no more because of thee? How many fields must go empty that might have been fair with cottages, white cottages with children all about them? How many valleys must go desolate that might have nursed warm hamlets, because thou hast slain long since the men that might have built them? I hear the wind crying against thee, thou sword! It comes from the empty valleys. It comes over the bare fields. There are children’s voices in it. They were never born. Death brings an end to crying for those that had life once, but these must cry for ever. O sword! sword! why did the gods send thee among men?’ And the tears of Rold fell down upon the proud sword but could not wash it clean.

And now that the ardour of battle had passed away, the spirits of Merimna’s people began to gloom a little, like their leader’s, with their fatigue and with the cold of the morning; and they looked at the sword of Welleran in Rold’s hand and said: ‘Not any more, not any more for ever will Welleran now return, for his sword is in the hand of another. Now we know indeed that he is dead. O Welleran, thou wast our sun and moon and all our stars. Now is the sun fallen down and the moon broken, and all the stars are scattered as the diamonds of a necklace that is snapped off one who is slain by violence.’

Thus wept the people of Merimna in the hour of their great victory, for men have strange moods, while beside them their old inviolate city slumbered safe. But back from the ramparts and beyond the mountains and over the lands that they had conquered of old, beyond the world and back

again to Paradise, went the souls of Welleran, Soorenard, Mommolek, Rollory, Akanax, and young Iraine.

THE FALL OF BABBULKUND

I said: ‘I will arise now and see Babbulkund, City of Marvel. She is of one age with the earth; the stars are her sisters. Pharaohs of the old time coming conquering from Araby first saw her, a solitary mountain in the desert, and cut the mountain into towers and terraces. They destroyed one of the hills of God, but they made Babbulkund. She is carven, not built; her palaces are one with her terraces, there is neither join nor cleft. Hers is the beauty of the youth of the world. She deemeth herself to be the middle of Earth, and hath four gates facing outward to the Nations. There sits outside her eastern gate a colossal god of stone. His face flushes with the lights of dawn. When the morning sunlight warms his lips they part a little, and he giveth utterance to the words “Oon Oom,” and the language is long since dead in which he speaks, and all his worshippers are gathered to their tombs, so that none knoweth what the words portend that he uttereth at dawn. Some say that he greets the sun as one god greets another in the language thereof, and others say that he proclaims the day, and others that he uttereth warning. And at every gate is a marvel not credible until beholden.’

And I gathered three friends and said to them: ‘We are what we have seen and known. Let us journey now and behold Babbulkund, that our minds may be beautified with it and our spirits made holier.’

So we took ship and travelled over the lifting sea, and remembered not things done in the towns we knew, but laid away the thoughts of them like soiled linen and put them by, and dreamed of Babbulkund.

But when we came to the land of which Babbulkund is the abiding glory, we hired a caravan of camels and Arab guides, and passed southwards in the afternoon on the three days’ journey through the desert that should bring us to the white walls of Babbulkund. And the heat of the sun shone upon us out of the bright grey sky, and the heat of the desert beat up at us from below.

About sunset we halted and tethered our horses, while the Arabs unloaded the provisions from the camels and prepared a fire out of the dry scrub, for at sunset the heat of the desert departs from it suddenly, like a bird. Then we saw a traveller approaching us on a camel coming from the south. When he was come near we said to him:

‘Come and encamp among us, for in the desert all men are brothers, and we will give thee meat to eat and wine, or, if thou art bound by thy faith, we

will give thee some other drink that is not accursed by the prophet.'

The traveller seated himself beside us on the sand, and crossed his legs and answered:

'Hearken, and I will tell you of Babbulkund, City of Marvel. Babbulkund stands just below the meeting of the rivers, where Oonrana, River of Myth, flows into the Waters of Fable, even the old stream Plegáthanees. These, together, enter her northern gate rejoicing. Of old they flowed in the dark through the Hill that Nehemoth, the first of Pharaohs, carved into the City of Marvel. Sterile and desolate they float far through the desert, each in the appointed cleft, with life upon neither bank, but give birth in Babbulkund to the sacred purple garden whereof all nations sing. Thither all the bees come on a pilgrimage at evening by a secret way of the air. Once, from his twilit kingdom, which he rules equally with the sun, the moon saw and loved Babbulkund, clad with her purple garden; and the moon wooed Babbulkund, and she sent him weeping away, for she is more beautiful than all her sisters the stars. Her sisters come to her at night into her maiden chamber. Even the gods speak sometimes of Babbulkund, clad with her purple garden. Listen, for I perceive by your eyes that ye have not seen Babbulkund; there is a restlessness in them and an unappeased wonder. Listen. In the garden whereof I spoke there is a lake that hath no twin or fellow in the world; there is no companion for it among all the lakes. The shores of it are of glass, and the bottom of it. In it are great fish having golden and scarlet scales, and they swim to and fro. Here it is the wont of the eighty-second Nehemoth (who rules in the city today) to come, after the dusk has fallen, and sit by the lake alone, and at this hour eight hundred slaves go down by steps through caverns into vaults beneath the lake. Four hundred of them carrying purple lights march one behind the other, from east to west, and four hundred carrying green lights march one behind the other, from west to east. The two lines cross and re-cross each other in and out as the slaves go round and round, and the fearful fish flash up and down and to and fro.'

But upon that traveller speaking night descended, solemn and cold, and we wrapped ourselves in our blankets and lay down upon the sand in the sight of the astral sisters of Babbulkund. And all that night the desert said many things, softly and in a whisper, but I knew not what he said. Only the sand knew and arose and was troubled and lay down again, and the wind knew. Then, as the hours of the night went by, these two discovered the

foot-tracks wherewith we had disturbed the holy desert, and they troubled over them and covered them up; and then the wind lay down and the sand rested. Then the wind arose again and the sand danced. This they did many times. And all the while the desert whispered what I shall not know.

Then I slept awhile and awoke just before sunrise, very cold. Suddenly the sun leapt up and flamed upon our faces; we all threw off our blankets and stood up. Then we took food, and afterwards started southwards, and in the heat of the day rested, and afterwards pushed on again. And all the while the desert remained the same, like a dream that will not cease to trouble a tired sleeper.

And often travellers passed us in the desert, coming from the City of Marvel, and there was a light and a glory in their eyes from having seen Babbulkund.

That evening, at sunset, another traveller neared us, and we hailed him, saying:

'Wilt thou eat and drink with us, seeing that all men are brothers in the desert?'

And he descended from his camel and sat by us and said:

'When morning shines on the colossus Neb and Neb speaks, at once the musicians of King Nehemoth in Babbulkund awake.

'At first their fingers wander over their golden harps, or they stroke idly their violins. Clearer and clearer the note of each instrument ascends like larks arising from the dew, till suddenly they all blend together and a new melody is born. Thus, every morning, the musicians of King Nehemoth make a new marvel in the City of Marvel; for these are no common musicians, but masters of melody, raided by conquest long since, and carried away in ships from the Isles of Song. And, at the sound of the music, Nehemoth awakes in the eastern chamber of his palace, which is carved in the form of a great crescent, four miles long, on the northern side of the city. Full in the windows of its eastern chamber the sun rises, and full in the windows of its western chamber the sun sets.

'When Nehemoth awakes he summons slaves who bring a palanquin with bells, which the King enters, having lightly robed. Then the slaves run and bear him to the onyx Chamber of the Bath, with the sound of small bells ringing as they run. And when Nehemoth emerges thence, bathed and anointed, the slaves run on with their ringing palanquin and bear him to the Orient Chamber of Banquets, where the King takes the first meal of the day.

Thence, through the great white corridor whose windows all face sunwards, Nehemoth, in his palanquin, passes on to the Audience Chamber of Embassies from the North, which is all decked with Northern wares.

‘All about it are ornaments of amber from the North and carven chalices of the dark brown Northern crystal, and on its floors lie furs from Baltic shores.

‘In adjoining chambers are stored the wonted food of the hardy Northern men, and the strong wine of the North, pale but terrible. Therein the King receives barbarian princes from the frigid lands. Thence the slaves bear him swiftly to the Audience Chamber of Embassies from the East, where the walls are of turquoise, studded with the rubies of Ceylon, where the gods are the gods of the East, where all the hangings have been devised in the gorgeous heart of Ind, and where all the carvings have been wrought with the cunning of the isles. Here, if a caravan hath chanced to have come in from Ind or from Cathay, it is the King’s wont to converse awhile with Moguls or Mandarins, for from the East come the arts and knowledge of the world, and the converse of their people is polite. Thus Nehemoth passes on through the other Audience Chambers and receives, perhaps, some Sheikhs of the Arab folk who have crossed the great desert from the West, or receives an embassy sent to do him homage from the shy jungle people to the South. And all the while the slaves with the ringing palanquin run westwards, following the sun, and ever the sun shines straight into the chamber where Nehemoth sits, and all the while the music from one or other of his bands of musicians comes tinkling to his ears. But when the middle of the day draws near, the slaves run to the cool groves that lie along the verandahs on the northern side of the palace, forsaking the sun, and as the heat overcomes the genius of the musicians, one by one their hands fall from their instruments, till at last all melody ceases. At this moment Nehemoth falls asleep, and the slaves put the palanquin down and lie down beside it. At this hour the city becomes quite still, and the palace of Nehemoth and the tombs of the Pharaohs of old face to the sunlight, all alike in silence. Even the jewellers in the market-place, selling gems to princes, cease from their bargaining and cease to sing; for in Babbulkund the vendor of rubies sings the song of the ruby, and the vendor of sapphires sings the song of the sapphire, and each stone hath its song, so that a man, by his song, proclaims and makes known his wares.

‘But all these sounds cease at the meridian hour, the jewellers in the market-place lie down in what shadow they can find, and the princes go back to the cool places in their palaces, and a great hush in the gleaming air hangs over Babbulkund. But in the cool of the late afternoon, one of the King’s musicians will awake from dreaming of his home and will pass his fingers, perhaps, over the strings of his harp and, with the music, some memory may arise of the wind in the glens of the mountains that stand in the Isles of Song. Then the musician will wrench great cries out of the soul of his harp for the sake of the old memory, and his fellows will awake and all make a song of home, woven of sayings told in the harbour when the ships came in, and of tales in the cottages about the people of old time. One by one the other bands of musicians will take up the song, and Babbulkund, City of Marvel, will throb with this marvel anew. Just now Nehemoth awakes, the slaves leap to their feet and bear the palanquin to the outer side of the great crescent palace between the south and the west, to behold the sun again. The palanquin, with its ringing bells, goes round once more; the voices of the jewellers sing again, in the market-place, the song of the emerald, the song of the sapphire; men talk on the housetops, beggars wail in the streets, the musicians bend to their work, all the sounds blend together into one murmur, the voice of Babbulkund speaking at evening. Lower and lower sinks the sun, till Nehemoth, following it, comes with his panting slaves to the great purple garden of which surely thine own country has its songs, from wherever thou art come.

‘There he alights from his palanquin and goes up to a throne of ivory set in the garden’s midst, facing full westwards, and sits there alone, long regarding the sunlight until it is quite gone. At this hour trouble comes into the face of Nehemoth. Men have heard him muttering at the time of sunset: “Even I too, even I too.” Thus do King Nehemoth and the sun make their glorious ambits about Babbulkund.

‘A little later, when the stars come out to envy the beauty of the City of Marvel, the King walks to another part of the garden and sits in an alcove of opal all alone by the marge of the sacred lake. This is the lake whose shores and floors are of glass, which is lit from beneath by slaves with purple lights and with green lights intermingling, and is one of the seven wonders of Babbulkund. Three of the wonders are in the city’s midst and four are at her gates. There is the lake, of which I tell thee, and the purple garden of which I have told thee and which is a wonder even to the stars, and there is

Ong Zwarba, of which I shall tell thee also. And the wonders at the gates are these. At the eastern gate Neb. And at the northern gate the wonder of the river and the arches, for the River of Myth, which becomes one with the Waters of Fable in the desert outside the city, floats under a gate of pure gold, rejoicing, and under many arches fantastically carven that are one with either bank. The marvel at the western gate is the marvel of Annolith and the dog Voth. Annolith sits outside the western gate facing towards the city. He is higher than any of the towers or palaces, for his head was carved from the summit of the old hill; he hath two eyes of sapphire wherewith he regards Babbulkund, and the wonder of the eyes is that they are today in the same sockets wherein they glowed when first the world began, only the marble that covered them has been carven away and the light of day let in and the sight of the envious stars. Larger than a lion is the dog Voth beside him; every hair is carven upon the back of Voth, his war hackles are erected and his teeth are bared. All the Nehemoths have worshipped the god Annolith, but all their people pray to the dog Voth, for the law of the land is that none but a Nehemoth may worship the god Annolith. The marvel at the southern gate is the marvel of the jungle, for he comes with all his wild untravelled sea of darkness and trees and tigers and sunward-aspiring orchids right through a marble gate in the city wall and enters the city, and there widens and holds a space in its midst of many miles across. Moreover, he is older than the City of Marvel, for he dwelt long since in one of the valleys of the mountain which Nehemoth, first of Pharaohs, carved into Babbulkund.

‘Now the opal alcove in which the King sits at evening by the lake stands at the edge of the jungle, and the climbing orchids of the jungle have long since crept from their homes through clefts of the opal alcove, lured by the lights of the lake, and now bloom there exultingly. Near to this alcove are the hareems of Nehemoth.

‘The King hath four hareems — one for the stalwart women from the mountains to the north, one for the dark and furtive jungle women, one for the desert women that have wandering souls and pine in Babbulkund, and one for the princesses of his own kith, whose brown cheeks blush with the blood of ancient Pharaohs and who exult with Babbulkund in her surpassing beauty, and who know nought of the desert or the jungle or the bleak hills to the north. Quite unadorned and clad in simple garments go all the kith of Nehemoth, for they know well that he grows weary of pomp. Unadorned all

save one, the Princess Linderith, who weareth Ong Zwarba and the three lesser gems of the sea. Such a stone is Ong Zwarba that there are none like it even in the turban of Nehemoth nor in all the sanctuaries of the sea. The same god that made Linderith made long ago Ong Zwarba; she and Ong Zwarba shine together with one light, and beside this marvellous stone gleam the three lesser ones of the sea.

'Now when the King sitteth in his opal alcove by the sacred lake with the orchids blooming around him all sounds are become still. The sound of the tramping of the weary slaves as they go round and round never comes to the surface. Long since the musicians sleep, and their hands have fallen dumb upon their instruments, and the voices in the city have died away. Perhaps a sigh of one of the desert women has become half a song, or on a hot night in summer one of the women of the hills sings softly a song of snow; all night long in the midst of the purple garden sings one nightingale; all else is still; the stars that look on Babbulkund arise and set, the cold unhappy moon drifts lonely through them, the night wears on; at last the dark figure of Nehemoth, eighty-second of his line, rises and moves stealthily away.'

The traveller ceased to speak. For a long time the clear stars, sisters of Babbulkund, had shone upon him speaking, the desert wind had arisen and whispered to the sand, and the sand had long gone secretly to and fro; none of us had moved, none of us had fallen asleep, not so much from wonder at his tale as from the thought that we ourselves in two days' time should see that wondrous city. Then we wrapped our blankets around us and lay down with our feet towards the embers of our fire and instantly were asleep, and in our dreams we multiplied the fame of the City of Marvel.

The sun arose and flamed upon our faces, and all the desert glinted with its light. Then we stood up and prepared the morning meal, and, when we had eaten, the traveller departed. And we commended his soul to the god of the land whereto he went, of the land of his home to the northward, and he commended our souls to the God of the people of the land wherefrom we had come. Then a traveller overtook us going on foot; he wore a brown cloak that was all in rags and he seemed to have been walking all night, and he walked hurriedly but appeared weary, so we offered him food and drink, of which he partook thankfully. When we asked him where he was going, he answered 'Babbulkund.' Then we offered him a camel upon which to ride, for we said, 'We also go to Babbulkund.' But he answered strangely:

‘Nay, pass on before me, for it is a sore thing never to have seen Babbulkund, having lived while yet she stood. Pass on before me and behold her, and then flee away at once, returning northwards.’

Then, though we understood him not, we left him, for he was insistent, and passed on our journey southwards through the desert, and we came before the middle of the day to an oasis of palm trees standing by a well and there we gave water to the haughty camels and replenished our water-bottles and soothed our eyes with the sight of green things and tarried for many hours in the shade. Some of the men slept, but of those that remained awake each man sang softly the songs of his own country, telling of Babbulkund. When the afternoon was far spent we travelled a little way southwards, and went on through the cool evening until the sun fell low and we encamped, and as we sat in our encampment the man in rags overtook us, having travelled all the day, and we gave him food and drink again, and in the twilight he spoke, saying:

‘I am the servant of the Lord the God of my people, and I go to do his work on Babbulkund. She is the most beautiful city in the world; there hath been none like her, even the stars of God go envious of her beauty. She is all white, yet with streaks of pink that pass through her streets and houses like flames in the white mind of a sculptor, like desire in Paradise. She hath been carved of old out of a holy hill, no slaves wrought the City of Marvel, but artists toiling at the work they loved. They took no pattern from the houses of men, but each man wrought what his inner eye had seen and carved in marble the visions of his dream. All over the roof of one of the palace chambers winged lions flit like bats, the size of every one is the size of the lions of God, and the wings are larger than any wing created; they are one above the other more than a man can number, they are all carven out of one block of marble, the chamber itself is hollowed from it, and it is borne aloft upon the carven branches of a grove of clustered tree-ferns wrought by the hand of some jungle mason that loved the tall fern well. Over the River of Myth, which is one with the Waters of Fable, go bridges, fashioned like the wisteria tree and like the drooping laburnum, and a hundred others of wonderful devices, the desire of the souls of masons a long while dead. Oh! very beautiful is white Babbulkund, very beautiful she is, but proud; and the Lord the God of my people hath seen her in her pride, and looking towards her hath seen the prayers of Nehemoth going up to the abomination Annolith and all the people following after Voth. She is very beautiful,

Babbulkund; alas that I may not bless her. I could live always on one of her inner terraces looking on the mysterious jungle in her midst and the heavenward faces of the orchids that, clambering from the darkness, behold the sun. I could love Babbulkund with a great love, yet am I the servant of the Lord the God of my people, and the King hath sinned unto the abomination Annolith, and the people lust exceedingly for Voth. Alas for thee, Babbulkund, alas that I may not even now turn back, for tomorrow I must prophesy against thee and cry out against thee, Babbulkund. But ye travellers that have entreated me hospitably, rise and pass on with your camels, for I can tarry no longer, and I go to do the work on Babbulkund of the Lord the God of my people. Go now and see the beauty of Babbulkund before I cry out against her, and then flee swiftly northwards.'

A smouldering fragment fell in upon our camp fire and sent a strange light into the eyes of the man in rags. He rose at once, and his tattered cloak swirled up with him like a great wing; he said no more, but turned round from us instantly southwards, and strode away into the darkness towards Babbulkund. Then a hush fell upon our encampment, and the smell of the tobacco of those lands arose. When the last flame died down in our camp fire I fell asleep, but my rest was troubled by shifting dreams of doom.

Morning came, and our guides told us that we should come to the city ere nightfall. Again we passed southwards through the changeless desert; sometimes we met travellers coming from Babbulkund, with the beauty of its marvels still fresh in their eyes.

When we encamped near the middle of the day we saw a great number of people on foot coming towards us running, from the southwards. These we hailed when they were come near, saying, 'What of Babbulkund?'

They answered: 'We are not of the race of the people of Babbulkund, but were captured in youth and taken away from the hills that are to the northward. Now we have all seen in visions of the stillness the Lord the God of our people calling to us from His hills, and therefore we all flee northwards. But in Babbulkund King Nehemoth hath been troubled in the nights by unkingly dreams of doom, and none may interpret what the dreams portend. Now this is the dream that King Nehemoth dreamed on the first night of his dreaming. He saw move through the stillness a bird all black, and beneath the beatings of his wings Babbulkund gloomed and darkened; and after him flew a bird all white, beneath the beatings of whose wings Babbulkund gleamed and shone; and there flew by four more birds

alternately black and white. And, as the black ones passed Babbulkund darkened, and when the white ones appeared her streets and houses shone. But after the sixth bird there came no more, and Babbulkund vanished from her place, and there was only the empty desert where she had stood, and the rivers Oonrana and Plegáthanees mourning alone. Next morning all the prophets of the King gathered before their abominations and questioned them of the dream, and the abominations spake not. But when the second night stepped down from the halls of God, dowered with many stars, King Nehemoth dreamed again; and in this dream King Nehemoth saw four birds only, black and white alternately as before. And Babbulkund darkened again as the black ones passed, and shone when the white came by; only after the four birds came no more, and Babbulkund vanished from her place, leaving only the forgetful desert and the mourning rivers.

'Still the abominations spake not, and none could interpret the dream. And when the third night came forth from the divine halls of her home dowered like her sisters, again King Nehemoth dreamed. And he saw a bird all black go by again, beneath whom Babbulkund darkened, and then a white bird and Babbulkund shone; and after them came no more, and Babbulkund passed away. And the golden day appeared, dispelling dreams, and still the abominations were silent, and the King's prophets answered not to portend the omen of the dream. One prophet only spake before the King, saying: "The sable birds, O King, are the nights, and the white birds are the days. . ." This thing the King had feared, and he arose and smote the prophet with his sword, whose soul went crying away and had to do no more with nights and days.

'It was last night that the King dreamed his third dream, and this morning we fled away from Babbulkund. A great heat lies over it, and the orchids of the jungle droop their heads. All night long the women in the hareem of the North have wailed horribly for their hills. A fear hath fallen upon the city, and a boding. Twice hath Nehemoth gone to worship Annolith, and all the people have prostrated themselves before Voth. Thrice the horologers have looked into the great crystal globe wherein are foretold all happenings to be, and thrice the globe was blank. Yea, though they went a fourth time yet was no vision revealed; and the people's voice is hushed in Babbulkund.'

Soon the travellers arose and pushed on northwards again, leaving us wondering. Through the heat of the day we rested as well as we might, but

the air was motionless and sultry and the camels ill at ease. The Arabs said that it boded a desert storm, and that a great wind would arise full of sand. So we arose in the afternoon, and travelled swiftly, hoping to come to shelter before the storm. And the air burned in the stillness between the baked desert and the glaring sky.

Suddenly a wind arose out of the South, blowing from Babbulkund, and the sand lifted and went by in great shapes, all whispering. And the wind blew violently, and wailed as it blew, and hundreds of sandy shapes went towering by, and there were little cries among them and the sounds of a passing away. Soon the wind sank quite suddenly, and its cries died, and the panic ceased among the driven sands. And when the storm departed the air was cool, and the terrible sultriness and the boding were passed away, and the camels had ease among them. And the Arabs said that the storm which was to be had been, as was willed of old by God.

The sun set and the gloaming came, and we neared the junction of Oonrana and Plegáthanees, but in the darkness discerned not Babbulkund. We pushed on hurriedly to reach the city ere nightfall, and came to the junction of the River of Myth where he meets with the Waters of Fable, and still saw not Babbulkund. All round us lay the sand and rocks of the unchanging desert, save to the southwards where the jungle stood with its orchids facing skywards. Then we perceived that we had arrived too late, and that her doom had come to Babbulkund; and by the river in the empty desert on the sand the man in rags was seated, with his face hidden in his hands, weeping bitterly.

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Thus passed away in the hour of her iniquities before Annolith, in the two thousand and thirty-second year of her being, in the six thousand and fiftieth year of the building of the World, Babbulkund, City of Marvel, sometime called by those that hated her City of the Dog, but hourly mourned in Araby and Ind and wide through jungle and desert; leaving no memorial in stone to show that she had been, but remembered with an abiding love, in spite of the anger of God, by all that knew her beauty, whereof still they sing.

THE KITH OF THE ELF FOLK

Chapter I

The north wind was blowing, and red and golden the last days of Autumn were streaming hence. Solemn and cold over the marshes arose the evening.

It became very still.

Then the last pigeon went home to the trees on the dry land in the distance, whose shapes already had taken upon themselves a mystery in the haze.

Then all was still again.

As the light faded and the haze deepened, mystery crept nearer from every side.

Then the green plover came in crying, and all alighted.

And again it became still, save when one of the plover arose and flew a little way uttering the cry of the waste. And hushed and silent became the earth, expecting the first star. Then the duck came in, and the widgeon, company by company: and all the light of day faded out of the sky saving one red band of light. Across the light appeared, black and huge, the wings of a flock of geese beating up wind to the marshes. These, too, went down among the rushes.

Then the stars appeared and shone in the stillness, and there was silence in the great spaces of the night.

Suddenly the bells of the cathedral in the marshes broke out, calling to evensong.

Eight centuries ago on the edge of the marsh men had built the huge cathedral, or it may have been seven centuries ago, or perhaps nine — it was all one to the Wild Things.

So evensong was held, and candles lighted, and the lights through the windows shone red and green in the water, and the sound of the organ went roaring over the marshes. But from the deep and perilous places, edged with bright mosses, the Wild Things came leaping up to dance on the reflection of the stars, and over their heads as they danced the marsh-lights rose and fell.

The Wild Things are somewhat human in appearance, only all brown of skin and barely two feet high. Their ears are pointed like the squirrel’s, only far larger, and they leap to prodigious heights. They live all day under deep pools in the loneliest marshes, but at night they come up and dance. Each Wild Thing has over its head a marsh-light, which moves as the Wild Thing

moves; they have no souls, and cannot die, and are of the kith of the Elf-folk.

All night they dance over the marshes, treading upon the reflection of the stars (for the bare surface of the water will not hold them by itself); but when the stars begin to pale, they sink down one by one into the pools of their home. Or if they tarry longer, sitting upon the rushes, their bodies fade from view as the marsh-fires pale in the light, and by daylight none may see the Wild Things of the kith of the Elf-folk. Neither may any see them even at night unless they were born, as I was, in the hour of dusk, just at the moment when the first star appears.

Now, on the night that I tell of, a little Wild Thing had gone drifting over the waste, till it came right up to the walls of the cathedral and danced upon the images of the coloured saints as they lay in the water among the reflection of the stars. And as it leaped in its fantastic dance, it saw through the painted windows to where the people prayed, and heard the organ roaring over the marshes. The sound of the organ roared over the marshes, but the song and prayers of the people streamed up from the cathedral's highest tower like thin gold chains, and reached to Paradise, and up and down them went the angels from Paradise to the people, and from the people to Paradise again.

Then something akin to discontent troubled the Wild Thing for the first time since the making of the marshes; and the soft grey ooze and the chill of the deep water seemed to be not enough, nor the first arrival from northwards of the tumultuous geese, nor the wild rejoicing of the wings of the wildfowl when every feather sings, nor the wonder of the calm ice that comes when the snipe depart and beards the rushes with frost and clothes the hushed waste with a mysterious haze where the sun goes red and low, nor even the dance of the Wild Things in the marvellous night; and the little Wild Thing longed to have a soul, and to go and worship God.

And when evensong was over and the lights were out, it went back crying to its kith.

But on the next night, as soon as the images of the stars appeared in the water, it went leaping away from star to star to the farthest edge of the marshlands, where a great wood grew where dwelt the Oldest of the Wild Things.

And it found the Oldest of Wild Things sitting under a tree, sheltering itself from the moon.

And the little Wild Thing said: ‘I want to have a soul to worship God, and to know the meaning of music, and to see the inner beauty of the marshlands and to imagine Paradise.’

And the Oldest of the Wild Things said to it: ‘What have we to do with God? We are only Wild Things, and of the kith of the Elf-folk.’

But it only answered, ‘I want to have a soul.’

Then the Oldest of the Wild Things said: ‘I have no soul to give you; but if you got a soul, one day you would have to die, and if you knew the meaning of music you would learn the meaning of sorrow, and it is better to be a Wild Thing and not to die.’

So it went weeping away.

But they that were kin to the Elf-folk were sorry for the little Wild Thing; and though the Wild Things cannot sorrow long, having no souls to sorrow with, yet they felt for awhile a soreness where their souls should be, when they saw the grief of their comrade.

So the kith of the Elf-folk went abroad by night to make a soul for the little Wild Thing. And they went over the marshes till they came to the high fields among the flowers and grasses. And there they gathered a large piece of gossamer that the spider had laid by twilight; and the dew was on it.

Into this dew had shone all the lights of the long banks of the ribbed sky, as all the colours changed in the restful spaces of evening. And over it the marvellous night had gleamed with all its stars.

Then the Wild Things went with their dew-bespangled gossamer down to the edge of their home. And there they gathered a piece of the grey mist that lies by night over the marshlands. And into it they put the melody of the waste that is borne up and down the marshes in the evening on the wings of the golden plover. And they put into it, too, the mournful song that the reeds are compelled to sing before the presence of the arrogant North Wind. Then each of the Wild Things gave some treasured memory of the old marshes, ‘For we can spare it,’ they said. And to all this they added a few images of the stars that they gathered out of the water. Still the soul that the kith of the Elf-folk were making had no life.

Then they put into it the low voices of two lovers that went walking in the night, wandering late alone. And after that they waited for the dawn. And the queenly dawn appeared, and the marsh-lights of the Wild Things paled in the glare, and their bodies faded from view; and still they waited by

the marsh's edge. And to them waiting came over field and marsh, from the ground and out of the sky, the myriad song of the birds.

This, too, the Wild Things put into the piece of haze that they had gathered in the marshlands, and wrapped it all up in their dew-bespangled gossamer. Then the soul lived.

And there it lay in the hands of the Wild Things no larger than a hedgehog; and wonderful lights were in it, green and blue; and they changed ceaselessly, going round and round, and in the grey midst of it was a purple flare.

And the next night they came to the little Wild Thing and showed her the gleaming soul. And they said to her: 'If you must have a soul and go and worship God, and become a mortal and die, place this to your left breast a little above the heart, and it will enter and you will become a human. But if you take it you can never be rid of it to become immortal again unless you pluck it out and give it to another; and we will not take it, and most of the humans have a soul already. And if you cannot find a human without a soul you will one day die, and your soul cannot go to Paradise, because it was only made in the marshes.'

Far away the little Wild Thing saw the cathedral windows alight for evensong, and the song of the people mounting up to Paradise, and all the angels going up and down. So it bid farewell with tears and thanks to the Wild Things of the kith of Elf-folk, and went leaping away towards the green dry land, holding the soul in its hands.

And the Wild Things were sorry that it had gone, but could not be sorry long, because they had no souls.

At the marsh's edge the little Wild Thing gazed for some moments over the water to where the marsh-fires were leaping up and down, and then pressed the soul against its left breast a little above the heart.

Instantly it became a young and beautiful woman, who was cold and frightened. She clad herself somehow with bundles of reeds, and went towards the lights of a house that stood close by. And she pushed open the door and entered, and found a farmer and a farmer's wife sitting over their supper.

And the farmer's wife took the little Wild Thing with the soul of the marshes up to her room, and clothed her and braided her hair, and brought her down again, and gave her the first food that she had ever eaten. Then the farmer's wife asked many questions.

‘Where have you come from?’ she said.

‘Over the marshes.’

‘From what direction?’ said the farmer’s wife.

‘South,’ said the little Wild Thing with the new soul.

‘But none can come over the marshes from the south,’ said the farmer’s wife.

‘No, they can’t do that,’ said the farmer.

‘I lived in the marshes.’

‘Who are you?’ asked the farmer’s wife.

‘I am a Wild Thing, and have found a soul in the marshes, and we are kin to the Elf-folk.’

Talking it over afterwards, the farmer and his wife agreed that she must be a gipsy who had been lost, and that she was queer with hunger and exposure.

So that night the little Wild Thing slept in the farmer’s house, but her new soul stayed awake the whole night long dreaming of the beauty of the marshes.

As soon as dawn came over the waste and shone on the farmer’s house, she looked from the window towards the glittering waters, and saw the inner beauty of the marsh. For the Wild Things only love the marsh and know its haunts, but now she perceived the mystery of its distances and the glamour of its perilous pools, with their fair and deadly mosses, and felt the marvel of the North Wind who comes dominant out of unknown icy lands, and the wonder of that ebb and flow of life when the wildfowl whirl in at evening to the marshlands and at dawn pass out to sea. And she knew that over her head above the farmer’s house stretched wide Paradise, where perhaps God was now imagining a sunrise while angels played low on lutes, and the sun came rising up on the world below to gladden fields and marsh.

And all that heaven thought, the marsh thought too; for the blue of the marsh was as the blue of heaven, and the great cloud shapes in heaven became the shapes in the marsh, and through each ran momentary rivers of purple, errant between banks of gold. And the stalwart army of reeds appeared out of the gloom with all their pennons waving as far as the eye could see. And from another window she saw the vast cathedral gathering its ponderous strength together, and lifting it up in towers out of the marshlands.

She said, ‘I will never, never leave the marsh.’

An hour later she dressed with great difficulty and went down to eat the second meal of her life. The farmer and his wife were kindly folk, and taught her how to eat.

‘I suppose the gipsies don’t have knives and forks,’ one said to the other afterwards.

After breakfast the farmer went and saw the Dean, who lived near his cathedral, and presently returned and brought back to the Dean’s house the little Wild Thing with the new soul.

‘This is the lady,’ said the farmer. ‘This is Dean Murnith.’ Then he went away.

‘Ah,’ said the Dean, ‘I understand you were lost the other night in the marshes. It was a terrible night to be lost in the marshes.’

‘I love the marshes,’ said the little Wild Thing with the new soul.

‘Indeed! How old are you?’ said the Dean.

‘I don’t know,’ she answered.

‘You must know about how old you are,’ he said.

‘Oh, about ninety,’ she said, ‘or more.’

‘Ninety years!’ exclaimed the Dean.

‘No, ninety centuries,’ she said; ‘I am as old as the marshes.’

Then she told her story — how she had longed to be a human and go and worship God, and have a soul and see the beauty of the world, and how all the Wild Things had made her a soul of gossamer and mist and music and strange memories.

‘But if this is true,’ said Dean Murnith, ‘this is very wrong. God cannot have intended you to have a soul.

‘What is your name?’

‘I have no name,’ she answered.

‘We must find a Christian name and a surname for you. What would you like to be called?’

‘Song of the Rushes,’ she said.

‘That won’t do at all,’ said the Dean.

‘Then I would like to be called Terrible North Wind, or Star in the Waters,’ she said.

‘No, no, no,’ said Dean Murnith; ‘that is quite impossible. We could call you Miss Rush if you like. How would Mary Rush do? Perhaps you had

better have another name — say Mary Jane Rush.'

So the little Wild Thing with the soul of the marshes took the names that were offered her, and became Mary Jane Rush.

'And we must find something for you to do,' said Dean Murnith. 'Meanwhile we can give you a room here.'

'I don't want to do anything,' replied Mary Jane; 'I want to worship God in the cathedral and live beside the marshes.'

Then Mrs. Murnith came in, and for the rest of that day Mary Jane stayed at the house of the Dean.

And there with her new soul she perceived the beauty of the world; for it came grey and level out of misty distances, and widened into grassy fields and ploughlands right up to the edge of an old gabled town; and solitary in the fields far off an ancient windmill stood, and his honest hand-made sails went round and round in the free East Anglian winds. Close by, the gabled houses leaned out over the streets, planted fair upon sturdy timbers that grew in the olden time, all glorying among themselves upon their beauty. And out of them, buttress by buttress, growing and going upwards, aspiring tower by tower, rose the cathedral.

And she saw the people moving in the streets all leisurely and slow, and unseen among them, whispering to each other, unheard by living men and concerned only with bygone things, drifted the ghosts of very long ago. And wherever the streets ran eastwards, wherever were gaps in the houses, always there broke into view the sight of the great marshes, like to some bar of music weird and strange that haunts a melody, arising again and again, played on the violin by one musician only, who plays no other bar, and he is swart and lank about the hair and bearded about the lips, and his moustache droops long and low, and no one knows the land from which he comes.

All these were good things for a new soul to see.

Then the sun set over green fields and ploughland and the night came up. One by one the merry lights of cheery lamp-lit windows took their stations in the solemn night.

Then the bells rang, far up in a cathedral tower, and their melody fell on the roofs of the old houses and poured over their eaves until the streets were full, and then flooded away over green fields and plough, till it came to the

sturdy mill and brought the miller trudging to evensong, and far away eastwards and seawards the sound rang out over the remoter marshes. And it was all as yesterday to the old ghosts in the streets.

Then the Dean's wife took Mary Jane to evening service, and she saw three hundred candles filling all the aisle with light. But sturdy pillars stood there in unlit vastnesses; great colonnades going away into the gloom, where evening and morning, year in year out, they did their work in the dark, holding the cathedral roof aloft. And it was stiller than the marshes are still when the ice has come and the wind that brought it has fallen.

Suddenly into this stillness rushed the sound of the organ, roaring, and presently the people prayed and sang.

No longer could Mary Jane see their prayers ascending like thin gold chains, for that was but an elfin fancy, but she imagined clear in her new soul the seraphs passing in the ways of Paradise, and the angels changing guard to watch the World by night.

When the Dean had finished service, a young curate, Mr. Millings, went up into the pulpit.

He spoke of Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus: and Mary Jane was glad that there were rivers having such names, and heard with wonder of Nineveh, that great city, and many things strange and new.

And the light of the candles shone on the curate's fair hair, and his voice went ringing down the aisle, and Mary Jane rejoiced that he was there.

But when his voice stopped she felt a sudden loneliness, such as she had not felt since the making of the marshes; for the Wild Things never are lonely and never unhappy, but dance all night on the reflection of the stars, and having no souls, desire nothing more.

After the collection was made, before anyone moved to go, Mary Jane walked up the aisle to Mr. Millings.

'I love you,' she said.

Chapter II

Nobody sympathised with Mary Jane.

‘So unfortunate for Mr. Millings,’ every one said; ‘such a promising young man.’

Mary Jane was sent away to a great manufacturing city of the Midlands, where work had been found for her in a cloth factory. And there was nothing in that town that was good for a soul to see. For it did not know that beauty was to be desired; so it made many things by machinery, and became hurried in all its ways, and boasted its superiority over other cities and became richer and richer, and there was none to pity it.

In this city Mary Jane had had lodgings found for her near the factory.

At six o’clock on those November mornings, about the time that, far away from the city, the wildfowl rose up out of the calm marshes and passed to the troubled spaces of the sea, at six o’clock the factory uttered a prolonged howl and gathered the workers together, and there they worked, saving two hours for food, the whole of the daylit hours and into the dark till the bells tolled six again.

There Mary Jane worked with other girls in a long dreary room, where giants sat pounding wool into a long thread-like strip with iron, rasping hands. And all day long they roared as they sat at their soulless work. But the work of Mary Jane was not with these, only their roar was ever in her ears as their clattering iron limbs went to and fro.

Her work was to tend a creature smaller, but infinitely more cunning.

It took the strip of wool that the giants had threshed, and whirled it round and round until it had twisted it into hard thin thread. Then it would make a clutch with fingers of steel at the thread that it had gathered, and waddle away about five yards and come back with more.

It had mastered all the subtlety of skilled workers, and had gradually displaced them; one thing only it could not do, it was unable to pick up the ends if a piece of the thread broke, in order to tie them together again. For this a human soul was required, and it was Mary Jane’s business to pick up broken ends; and the moment she placed them together the busy soulless creature tied them for itself.

All here was ugly; even the green wool as it whirled round and round was neither the green of the grass nor yet the green of the rushes, but a sorry

muddy green that befitted a sullen city under a murky sky.

When she looked out over the roofs of the town, there too was ugliness; and well the houses knew it, for with hideous stucco they aped in grotesque mimicry the pillars and temples of old Greece, pretending to one another to be that which they were not. And emerging from these houses and going in, and seeing the pretence of paint and stucco year after year until it all peeled away, the souls of the poor owners of those houses sought to be other souls until they grew weary of it.

At evening Mary Jane went back to her lodgings. Only then, after the dark had fallen, could the soul of Mary Jane perceive any beauty in that city, when the lamps were lit and here and there a star shone through the smoke. Then she would have gone abroad and beheld the night, but this the old woman to whom she was confided would not let her do. And the days multiplied themselves by seven and became weeks, and the weeks passed by, and all days were the same. And all the while the soul of Mary Jane was crying for beautiful things, and found not one, saving on Sundays, when she went to church, and left it to find the city greyer than before.

One day she decided that it was better to be a wild thing in the lovely marshes, than to have a soul that cried for beautiful things and found not one. From that day she determined to be rid of her soul, so she told her story to one of the factory girls, and said to her:

‘The other girls are poorly clad and they do soulless work; surely some of them have no souls and would take mine.’

But the factory girl said to her: ‘All the poor have souls. It is all they have.’

Then Mary Jane watched the rich whenever she saw them, and vainly sought for some one without a soul.

One day at the hour when the machines rested and the human beings that tended them rested too, the wind being at that time from the direction of the marshlands, the soul of Mary Jane lamented bitterly. Then, as she stood outside the factory gates, the soul irresistibly compelled her to sing, and a wild song came from her lips, hymning the marshlands. And into her song came crying her yearning for home, and for the sound of the shout of the North Wind, masterful and proud, with his lovely lady the Snow; and she sang of tales that the rushes murmured to one another, tales that the teal knew and the watchful heron. And over the crowded streets her song went crying away, the song of waste places and of wild free lands, full of wonder

and magic, for she had in her elf-made soul the song of the birds and the roar of the organ in the marshes.

At this moment Signor Thompsoni, the well-known English tenor, happened to go by with a friend. They stopped and listened; everyone stopped and listened.

'There has been nothing like this in Europe in my time,' said Signor Thompsoni.

So a change came into the life of Mary Jane.

People were written to, and finally it was arranged that she should take a leading part in the Covent Garden Opera in a few weeks.

So she went to London to learn.

London and singing lessons were better than the City of the Midlands and those terrible machines. Yet still Mary Jane was not free to go and live as she liked by the edge of the marshlands, and she was still determined to be rid of her soul, but could find no one that had not a soul of their own.

One day she was told that the English people would not listen to her as Miss Rush, and was asked what more suitable name she would like to be called by.

'I would like to be called Terrible North Wind,' said Mary Jane, 'or Song of the Rushes.'

When she was told that this was impossible and Signorina Maria Russiano was suggested, she acquiesced at once, as she had acquiesced when they took her away from her curate; she knew nothing of the ways of humans.

At last the day of the Opera came round, and it was a cold day of the winter.

And Signorina Russiano appeared on the stage before a crowded house.

And Signorina Russiano sang.

And into the song went all the longing of her soul, the soul that could not go to Paradise, but could only worship God and know the meaning of music, and the longing pervaded that Italian song as the infinite mystery of the hills is borne along the sound of distant sheep-bells. Then in the souls that were in that crowded house arose little memories of a great while since

that were quite quite dead, and lived awhile again during that marvellous song.

And a strange chill went into the blood of all that listened, as though they stood on the border of bleak marshes and the North Wind blew.

And some it moved to sorrow and some to regret, and some to an unearthly joy, — then suddenly the song went wailing away like the winds of the winter from the marshlands when Spring appears from the South.

So it ended. And a great silence fell fog-like over all that house, breaking in upon the end of a chatty conversation that Cecilia, Countess of Birmingham, was enjoying with a friend.

In the dead hush Signorina Russiano rushed from the stage; she appeared again running among the audience, and dashed up to Lady Birmingham.

'Take my soul,' she said; 'it is a beautiful soul. It can worship God, and knows the meaning of music and can imagine Paradise. And if you go to the marshlands with it you will see beautiful things; there is an old town there built of lovely timbers, with ghosts in its streets.'

Lady Birmingham stared. Everyone was standing up. 'See,' said Signorina Russiano, 'it is a beautiful soul.'

And she clutched at her left breast a little above the heart, and there was the soul shining in her hand, with the green and blue lights going round and round and the purple flare in the midst.

'Take it,' she said, 'and you will love all that is beautiful, and know the four winds, each one by his name, and the songs of the birds at dawn. I do not want it, because I am not free. Put it to your left breast a little above the heart.'

Still everybody was standing up, and Lady Birmingham felt uncomfortable.

'Please offer it to some one else,' she said.

'But they all have souls already,' said Signorina Russiano.

And everybody went on standing up. And Lady Birmingham took the soul in her hand.

'Perhaps it is lucky,' she said.

She felt that she wanted to pray.

She half-closed her eyes, and said '*Unberufen*'. Then she put the soul to her left breast a little above the heart, and hoped that the people would sit

down and the singer go away.

Instantly a heap of clothes collapsed before her. For a moment, in the shadow among the seats, those who were born in the dusk hour might have seen a little brown thing leaping free from the clothes, then it sprang into the bright light of the hall, and became invisible to any human eye.

It dashed about for a little, then found the door, and presently was in the lamplit streets.

To those that were born in the dusk hour it might have been seen leaping rapidly wherever the streets ran northwards and eastwards, disappearing from human sight as it passed under the lamps and appearing again beyond them with a marsh-light over its head.

Once a dog perceived it and gave chase, and was left far behind.

The cats of London, who are all born in the dusk hour, howled fearfully as it went by.

Presently it came to the meaner streets, where the houses are smaller. Then it went due north-eastwards, leaping from roof to roof. And so in a few minutes it came to more open spaces, and then to the desolate lands, where market gardens grow, which are neither town nor country. Till at last the good black trees came into view, with their demoniac shapes in the night, and the grass was cold and wet, and the night-mist floated over it. And a great white owl came by, going up and down in the dark. And at all these things the little Wild Thing rejoiced elvishly.

And it left London far behind it, reddening the sky, and could distinguish no longer its unlovely roar, but heard again the noises of the night.

And now it would come through a hamlet glowing and comfortable in the night; and now to the dark, wet, open fields again; and many an owl it overtook as they drifted through the night, a people friendly to the Elf-folk. Sometimes it crossed wide rivers, leaping from star to star; and, choosing its way as it went, to avoid the hard rough roads, came before midnight to the East Anglian lands.

And it heard there the shout of the North Wind, who was dominant and angry, as he drove southwards his adventurous geese; while the rushes bent before him chaunting plaintively and low, like enslaved rowers of some fabulous trireme, bending and swinging under blows of the lash, and singing all the while a doleful song.

And it felt the good dank air that clothes by night the broad East Anglian lands, and came again to some old perilous pool where the soft green

mosses grew, and there plunged downward and downward into the dear dark water till it felt the homely ooze once more coming up between its toes. Thence, out of the lovely chill that is in the heart of the ooze, it arose renewed and rejoicing to dance upon the image of the stars.

I chanced to stand that night by the marsh's edge, forgetting in my mind the affairs of men; and I saw the marsh-fires come leaping up from all the perilous places. And they came up by flocks the whole night long to the number of a great multitude, and danced away together over the marshes.

And I believe that there was a great rejoicing all that night among the kith of the Elf-folk.

THE HIGHWAYMEN

Tom o' the Roads had ridden his last ride, and was now alone in the night. From where he was, a man might see the white recumbent sheep and the black outline of the lonely downs, and the grey line of the farther and lonelier downs beyond them; or in hollows far below him, out of the pitiless wind, he might see the grey smoke of hamlets arising from black valleys. But all alike was black to the eyes of Tom, and all the sounds were silence in his ears; only his soul struggled to slip from the iron chains and to pass southwards into Paradise. And the wind blew and blew.

For Tom tonight had nought but the wind to ride; they had taken his true black horse on the day when they took from him the green fields and the sky, men's voices and the laughter of women, and had left him alone with chains about his neck to swing in the wind for ever. And the wind blew and blew.

But the soul of Tom o' the Roads was nipped by the cruel chains, and whenever it struggled to escape it was beaten backwards into the iron collar by the wind that blows from Paradise from the south. And swinging there by the neck, there fell away old sneers from off his lips, and scoffs that he had long since scoffed at God fell from his tongue, and there rotted old bad lusts out of his heart, and from his fingers the stains of deeds that were evil; and they all fell to the ground and grew there in pallid rings and clusters. And when these ill things had all fallen away, Tom's soul was clean again, as his early love had found it, a long while since in spring; and it swung up there in the wind with the bones of Tom, and with his old torn coat and rusty chains.

And the wind blew and blew.

And ever and anon the souls of the sepultured, coming from consecrated acres, would go by beating up wind to Paradise past the Gallows Tree and past the soul of Tom, that might not go free.

Night after night Tom watched the sheep upon the downs with empty hollow sockets, till his dead hair grew and covered his poor dead face, and hid the shame of it from the sheep. And the wind blew and blew.

Sometimes on gusts of the wind came someone's tears, and beat and beat against the iron chains, but could not rust them through. And the wind blew and blew.

And every evening all the thoughts that Tom had ever uttered came flocking in from doing their work in the world, the work that may not cease, and sat along the gallows branches and chirrupped to the soul of Tom, the soul that might not go free. All the thoughts that he had ever uttered! And the evil thoughts rebuked the soul that bore them because they might not die. And all those that he had uttered the most furtively, chirrupped the loudest and the shrillest in the branches all the night.

And all the thoughts that Tom had ever thought about himself now pointed at the wet bones and mocked at the old torn coat. But the thoughts that he had had of others were the only companions that his soul had to soothe it in the night as it swung to and fro. And they twittered to the soul and cheered the poor dumb thing that could have dreams no more, till there came a murderous thought and drove them all away.

And the wind blew and blew.

Paul, Archbishop of Alois and Vayence, lay in his white sepulchre of marble, facing full to the southwards towards Paradise. And over his tomb was sculptured the Cross of Christ, that his soul might have repose. No wind howled here as it howled in lonely tree-tops up upon the downs, but came with gentle breezes, orchard scented, over the low lands from Paradise from the southwards, and played about forget-me-nots and grasses in the consecrated land where lay the Reposeful round the sepulchre of Paul, Archbishop of Alois and Vayence. Easy it was for a man's soul to pass from such a sepulchre, and, flitting low over remembered fields, to come upon the garden lands of Paradise and find eternal ease.

And the wind blew and blew.

In a tavern of foul repute three men were lapping gin. Their names were Joe and Will and the gypsy Puglioni; none other names had they, for of whom their fathers were they had no knowledge, but only dark suspicions.

Sin had caressed and stroked their faces often with its paws, but the face of Puglioni Sin had kissed all over the mouth and chin. Their food was robbery and their pastime murder. All of them had incurred the sorrow of God and the enmity of man. They sat at a table with a pack of cards before them, all greasy with the marks of cheating thumbs. And they whispered to one another over their gin, but so low that the landlord of the tavern at the other end of the room could hear only muffled oaths, and knew not by Whom they swore or what they said.

These three were the staunchest friends that ever God had given unto a man. And he to whom their friendship had been given had nothing else besides, saving some bones that swung in the wind and rain, and an old torn coat and iron chains, and a soul that might not go free.

But as the night wore on the three friends left their gin and stole away, and crept down to that graveyard where rested in his sepulchre Paul, Archbishop of Alois and Vayence. At the edge of the graveyard, but outside the consecrated ground, they dug a hasty grave, two digging while one watched in the wind and rain. And the worms that crept in the unhallowed ground wondered and waited.

And the terrible hour of midnight came upon them with its fears, and found them still beside the place of tombs. And the three friends trembled at the horror of such an hour in such a place, and shivered in the wind and drenching rain, but still worked on. And the wind blew and blew.

Soon they had finished. And at once they left the hungry grave with all its worms unfed, and went away over the wet fields stealthily but in haste, leaving the place of tombs behind them in the midnight. And as they went they shivered, and each man as he shivered cursed the rain aloud. And so they came to the spot where they had hidden a ladder and a lantern. There they held long debate whether they should light the lantern, or whether they should go without it for fear of the King's men. But in the end it seemed to them better that they should have the light of their lantern, and risk being taken by the King's men and hanged, than that they should come suddenly face to face in the darkness with whatever one might come face to face with a little after midnight about the Gallows Tree.

On three roads in England whereon it was not the wont of folk to go their ways in safety, travellers tonight went unmolested. But the three friends, walking several paces wide of the King's highway, approached the Gallows Tree, and Will carried the lantern and Joe the ladder, but Puglioni carried a great sword wherewith to do the work which must be done. When they came close, they saw how bad was the case with Tom, for little remained of that fine figure of a man and nothing at all of his great resolute spirit, only as they came they thought they heard a whimpering cry like the sound of a thing that was caged and unfree.

To and fro, to and fro in the winds swung the bones and the soul of Tom, for the sins that he had sinned on the King's highway against the laws of the King; and with shadows and a lantern through the darkness, at the peril of

their lives, came the three friends that his soul had won before it swung in chains. Thus the seeds of Tom's own soul that he had sown all his life had grown into a Gallows Tree that bore in season iron chains in clusters; while the careless seeds that he had strewn here and there, a kindly jest and a few merry words, had grown into the triple friendship that would not desert his bones.

Then the three set the ladder against the tree, and Puglioni went up with his sword in his right hand, and at the top of it he reached up and began to hack at the neck below the iron collar. Presently, the bones and the old coat and the soul of Tom fell down with a rattle, and a moment afterwards his head that had watched so long alone swung clear from the swinging chain. These things Will and Joe gathered up, and Puglioni came running down his ladder, and they heaped upon its rungs the terrible remains of their friend, and hastened away wet through with the rain, with the fear of phantoms in their hearts and horror lying before them on the ladder. By two o'clock they were down again in the valley out of the bitter wind, but they went on past the open grave into the graveyard all among the tombs, with their lantern and their ladder and the terrible thing upon it, which kept their friendship still. Then these three, that had robbed the Law of its due and proper victim, still sinned on for what was still their friend, and levered out the marble slabs from the sacred sepulchre of Paul, Archbishop of Alois and Vayence. And from it they took the very bones of the Archbishop himself, and carried them away to the eager grave that they had left, and put them in and shovelled back the earth. But all that lay on the ladder they placed, with a few tears, within the great white sepulchre under the Cross of Christ, and put back the marble slabs.

Thence the soul of Tom, arising hallowed out of sacred ground, went at dawn down the valley, and, lingering a little about his mother's cottage and old haunts of childhood, passed on and came to the wide lands beyond the clustered homesteads. There, there met with it all the kindly thoughts that the soul of Tom had ever had, and they flew and sang beside it all the way southwards, until at last, with singing all about it, it came to Paradise.

But Will and Joe and the gypsy Puglioni went back to their gin, and robbed and cheated again in the tavern of foul repute, and knew not that in their sinful lives they had sinned one sin at which the Angels smiled.

IN THE TWILIGHT

The lock was quite crowded with boats when we capsized. I went down backwards for some few feet before I started to swim, then I came spluttering upwards towards the light; but, instead of reaching the surface, I hit my head against the keel of a boat and went down again. I struck out almost at once and came up, but before I reached the surface my head crashed against a boat for the second time, and I went right to the bottom. I was confused and thoroughly frightened. I was desperately in need of air, and knew that if I hit a boat for the third time I should never see the surface again. Drowning is a horrible death, notwithstanding all that has been said to the contrary. My past life never occurred to my mind, but I thought of many trivial things that I might not do or see again if I were drowned. I swam up in a slanting direction, hoping to avoid the boat that I had struck. Suddenly I saw all the boats in the lock quite clearly just above me, and every one of their curved varnished planks and the scratches and chips upon their keels. I saw several gaps among the boats where I might have swam up to the surface, but it did not seem worthwhile to try and get there, and I had forgotten why I wanted to. Then all the people leaned over the sides of their boats: I saw the light flannel suits of the men and the coloured flowers in the women's hats, and I noticed details of their dresses quite distinctly. Everybody in the boats was looking down at me; then they all said to one another, 'We must leave him now,' and they and the boats went away; and there was nothing above me but the river and the sky, and on either side of me were the green weeds that grew in the mud, for I had somehow sunk back to the bottom again. The river as it flowed by murmured not unpleasantly in my ears, and the rushes seemed to be whispering quite softly among themselves. Presently the murmuring of the river took the form of words, and I heard it say, 'We must go on to the sea; we must leave him now.'

Then the river went away, and both its banks; and the rushes whispered, 'Yes, we must leave him now.' And they too departed, and I was left in a great emptiness staring up at the blue sky. Then the great sky bent over me, and spoke quite softly like a kindly nurse soothing some little foolish child, and the sky said, 'Goodbye. All will be well. Goodbye.' And I was sorry to lose the blue sky, but the sky went away. Then I was alone, with nothing

round about me; I could see no light, but it was not dark — there was just absolutely nothing, above me and below me and on every side. I thought that perhaps I was dead, and that this might be eternity; when suddenly some great southern hills rose up all round about me, and I was lying on the warm, grassy slope of a valley in England. It was a valley that I had known well when I was young, but I had not seen it now for many years. Beside me stood the tall flower of the mint; I saw the sweet-smelling thyme flower and one or two wild strawberries. There came up to me from fields below me the beautiful smell of hay, and there was a break in the voice of the cuckoo. There was a feeling of summer and of evening and of lateness and of Sabbath in the air; the sky was calm and full of a strange colour, and the sun was low; the bells in the church in the village were all a-ring, and the chimes went wandering with echoes up the valley towards the sun, and whenever the echoes died a new chime was born. And all the people of the village walked up a stone-paved path under a black oak porch and went into the church, and the chimes stopped and the people of the village began to sing, and the level sunlight shone on the white tombstones that stood all round the church. Then there was a stillness in the village, and shouts and laughter came up from the valley no more, only the occasional sound of the organ and of song. And the blue butterflies, those that love the chalk, came and perched themselves on the tall grasses, five or six sometimes on a single piece of grass, and they closed their wings and slept, and the grass bent a little beneath them. And from the woods along the tops of the hills the rabbits came hopping out and nibbled the grass, and hopped a little further and nibbled again, and the large daisies closed their petals up and the birds began to sing.

Then the hills spoke, all the great chalk hills that I loved, and with a deep and solemn voice they said, ‘We have come to you to say Goodbye.’

Then they all went away, and there was nothing again all round about me upon every side. I looked everywhere for something on which to rest the eye. Nothing. Suddenly a low grey sky swept over me and a moist air met my face; a great plain rushed up to me from the edge of the clouds; on two sides it touched the sky, and on two sides between it and the clouds a line of low hills lay. One line of hills brooded grey in the distance, the other stood a patchwork of little square green fields, with a few white cottages about it. The plain was an archipelago of a million islands each about a yard square or less, and everyone of them was red with heather. I was back on the Bog

of Allen again after many years, and it was just the same as ever, though I had heard that they were draining it. I was with an old friend whom I was glad to see again, for they had told me that he died some years ago. He seemed strangely young, but what surprised me most was that he stood upon a piece of bright green moss which I had always learned to think would never bear. I was glad, too, to see the old bog again, and all the lovely things that grew there — the scarlet mosses and the green mosses and the firm and friendly heather, and the deep silent water. I saw a little stream that wandered vaguely through the bog, and little white shells down in the clear depths of it; I saw, a little way off, one of the great pools where no islands are, with rushes round its borders, where the duck love to come. I looked long at that untroubled world of heather, and then I looked at the white cottages on the hill, and saw the grey smoke curling from their chimneys and knew that they burned turf there, and longed for the smell of burning turf again. And far away there arose and came nearer the weird cry of wild and happy voices, and a flock of geese appeared that was coming from the northward. Then their cries blended into one great voice of exultation, the voice of freedom, the voice of Ireland, the voice of the Waste; and the voice said ‘Goodbye to you. Goodbye!’ and passed away into the distance; and as it passed, the tame geese on the farms cried out to their brothers up above them that they were free. Then the hills went away, and the bog and the sky went with them, and I was alone again, as lost souls are alone.

Then there grew up beside me the red brick buildings of my first school and the chapel that adjoined it. The fields a little way off were full of boys in white flannels playing cricket. On the asphalt playing ground, just by the schoolroom windows, stood Agamemnon, Achilles, and Odysseus, with their Argives armed behind them; but Hector stepped down out of a ground-floor window, and in the schoolroom were all Priam’s sons and the Achæans and fair Helen; and a little farther away the Ten Thousand drifted across the playground, going up into the heart of Persia to place Cyrus on his brother’s throne. And the boys that I knew called to me from the fields, and said ‘Goodbye,’ and they and the fields went away; and the Ten Thousand said ‘Goodbye,’ each file as they passed me marching swiftly, and they too disappeared. And Hector and Agamemnon said ‘Goodbye,’ and the host of the Argives and of the Achæans; and they all went away and the old school with them, and I was alone again.

The next scene that filled the emptiness was rather dim: I was being led by my nurse along a little footpath over a common in Surrey. She was quite young. Close by a band of gypsies had lit their fire, near them their romantic caravan stood unhorsed, and the horse cropped grass beside it. It was evening, and the gypsies muttered round their fire in a tongue unknown and strange. Then they all said in English, ‘Goodbye’. And the evening and the common and the campfire went away. And instead of this a white highway with darkness and stars below it that led into darkness and stars, but at the near end of the road were common fields and gardens, and there I stood close to a large number of people, men and women. And I saw a man walking alone down the road away from me towards the darkness and the stars, and all the people called him by his name, and the man would not hear them, but walked on down the road, and the people went on calling him by his name. But I became irritated with the man because he would not stop or turn round when so many people called him by his name, and it was a very strange name. And I became weary of hearing the strange name so very often repeated, so that I made a great effort to call him, that he might listen and that the people might stop repeating this strange name. And with the effort I opened my eyes wide, and the name that the people called was my own name, and I lay on the river’s bank with men and women bending over me, and my hair was wet.

THE GHOSTS

The argument that I had with my brother in his great lonely house will scarcely interest my readers. Not those, at least, whom I hope may be attracted by the experiment that I undertook, and by the strange things that befell me in that hazardous region into which so lightly and so ignorantly I allowed my fancy to enter. It was at Oneleigh that I had visited him.

Now Oneleigh stands in a wide isolation, in the midst of a dark gathering of old whispering cedars. They nod their heads together when the North Wind comes, and nod again and agree, and furtively grow still again, and say no more awhile. The North Wind is to them like a nice problem among wise old men; they nod their heads over it, and mutter about it all together. They know much, those cedars, they have been there so long. Their grandsires knew Lebanon, and the grandsires of these were the servants of the King of Tyre and came to Solomon's court. And amidst these black-haired children of grey-headed Time stood the old house of Oneleigh. I know not how many centuries had lashed against it their evanescent foam of years; but it was still unshattered, and all about it were the things of long ago, as cling strange growths to some sea-defying rock. Here, like the shells of long-dead limpets, was armour that men encased themselves in long ago; here, too, were tapestries of many colours, beautiful as seaweed; no modern flotsam ever drifted hither, no early Victorian furniture, no electric light. The great trade routes that littered the years with empty meat tins and cheap novels were far from here. Well, well, the centuries will shatter it and drive its fragments on to distant shores. Meanwhile, while it yet stood, I went on a visit there to my brother, and we argued about ghosts. My brother's intelligence on this subject seemed to me to be in need of correction. He mistook things imagined for things having an actual existence; he argued that second-hand evidence of persons having seen ghosts proved ghosts to exist. I said that even if they had seen ghosts, this was no proof at all; nobody believes that there are red rats, though there is plenty of first-hand evidence of men having seen them in delirium. Finally, I said I would see ghosts myself, and continue to argue against their actual existence. So I collected a handful of cigars and drank several cups of very strong tea, and went without my dinner, and retired into a room where there was dark oak and all the chairs were covered with tapestry; and my brother went to bed

bored with our argument, and trying hard to dissuade me from making myself uncomfortable. All the way up the old stairs as I stood at the bottom of them, and as his candle went winding up and up, I heard him still trying to persuade me to have supper and go to bed.

It was a windy winter, and outside the cedars were muttering I know not what about; but I think that they were Tories of a school long dead, and were troubled about something new. Within, a great damp log upon the fireplace began to squeak and sing, and struck up a whining tune, and a tall flame stood up over it and beat time, and all the shadows crowded round and began to dance. In distant corners old masses of darkness sat still like chaperones and never moved. Over there, in the darkest part of the room, stood a door that was always locked. It led into the hall, but no one ever used it; near that door something had happened once of which the family are not proud. We do not speak of it. There in the firelight stood the venerable forms of the old chairs; the hands that had made their tapestries lay far beneath the soil, the needles with which they wrought were many separate flakes of rust. No one wove now in that old room — no one but the assiduous ancient spiders who, watching by the deathbed of the things of yore, worked shrouds to hold their dust. In shrouds about the cornices already lay the heart of the oak wainscot that the worm had eaten out.

Surely at such an hour, in such a room, a fancy already excited by hunger and strong tea might see the ghosts of former occupants. I expected nothing less. The fire flickered and the shadows danced, memories of strange historic things rose vividly in my mind; but midnight chimed solemnly from a seven-foot clock, and nothing happened. My imagination would not be hurried, and the chill that is with the small hours had come upon me, and I had nearly abandoned myself to sleep, when in the hall adjoining there arose the rustling of silk dresses that I had waited for and expected. Then there entered two by two the high-born ladies and their gallants of Jacobean times. They were little more than shadows — very dignified shadows, and almost indistinct; but you have all read ghost stories before, you have all seen in museums the dresses of those times — there is little need to describe them; they entered, several of them, and sat down on the old chairs, perhaps a little carelessly considering the value of the tapestries. Then the rustling of their dresses ceased.

Well — I had seen ghosts, and was neither frightened nor convinced that ghosts existed. I was about to get up out of my chair and go to bed, when

there came a sound of pattering in the hall, a sound of bare feet coming over the polished floor, and every now and then a foot would slip and I heard claws scratching along the wood as some four-footed thing lost and regained its balance. I was not frightened, but uneasy. The pattering came straight towards the room that I was in, then I heard the sniffing of expectant nostrils; perhaps ‘uneasy’ was not the most suitable word to describe my feelings then. Suddenly a herd of black creatures larger than bloodhounds came galloping in; they had large pendulous ears, their noses were to the ground sniffing, they went up to the lords and ladies of long ago and fawned about them disgustingly. Their eyes were horribly bright, and ran down to great depths. When I looked into them I knew suddenly what these creatures were, and I was afraid. They were the sins, the filthy, immortal sins of those courtly men and women.

How demure she was, the lady that sat near me on an old-world chair — how demure she was, and how fair, to have beside her with its jowl upon her lap a sin with such cavernous red eyes, a clear case of murder. And you, yonder lady with the golden hair, surely not you — and yet that fearful beast with the yellow eyes slinks from you to yonder courtier there, and whenever one drives it away it slinks back to the other. Over there a lady tries to smile as she strokes the loathsome furry head of another’s sin, but one of her own is jealous and intrudes itself under her hand. Here sits an old nobleman with his grandson on his knee, and one of the great black sins of the grandfather is licking the child’s face and has made the child its own. Sometimes a ghost would move and seek another chair, but always his pack of sins would move behind him. Poor ghosts, poor ghosts! how many flights they must have attempted for two hundred years from their hated sins, how many excuses they must have given for their presence, and the sins were with them still — and still unexplained. Suddenly one of them seemed to scent my living blood, and bayed horribly, and all the others left their ghosts at once and dashed up to the sin that had given tongue. The brute had picked up my scent near the door by which I had entered, and they moved slowly nearer to me sniffing along the floor, and uttering every now and then their fearful cry. I saw that the whole thing had gone too far. But now they had seen me, now they were all about me, they sprang up trying to reach my throat; and whenever their claws touched me, horrible thoughts came into my mind and unutterable desires dominated my heart. I planned bestial things as these creatures leaped around me, and planned them with a

masterly cunning. A great red-eyed murder was among the foremost of those furry things from whom I feebly strove to defend my throat. Suddenly it seemed to me good that I should kill my brother. It seemed important to me that I should not risk being punished. I knew where a revolver was kept; after I had shot him, I would dress the body up and put flour on the face like a man that had been acting as a ghost. It would be very simple. I would say that he had frightened me — and the servants had heard us talking about ghosts. There were one or two trivialities that would have to be arranged, but nothing escaped my mind. Yes, it seemed to me very good that I should kill my brother as I looked into the red depths of this creature's eyes. But one last effort as they dragged me down— 'If two straight lines cut one another,' I said, 'the opposite angles are equal. Let AB, CD, cut one another at E, then the angles CEA, CEB equal two right angles (prop. xiii.). Also CEA, AED equal two right angles.'

I moved towards the door to get the revolver; a hideous exultation arose among the beasts. 'But the angle CEA is common, therefore AED equals CEB. In the same way CEA equals DEB. *QED*.' It was proved. Logic and reason re-established themselves in my mind, there were no dark hounds of sin, the tapestried chairs were empty. It seemed to me an inconceivable thought that a man should murder his brother.

THE WHIRLPOOL

Once going down to the shore of the great sea I came upon the Whirlpool lying prone upon the sand and stretching his huge limbs in the sun.

I said to him: ‘Who art thou?’

And he said:

‘I am named Nooz Wana, the Whelmer of Ships, and from the Straits of Pondar Obed I am come, wherein it is my wont to vex the seas. There I chased Leviathan with my hands when he was young and strong; often he slipped through my fingers, and away into the weed forests that grow below the storms in the dusk on the floor of the sea; but at last I caught and tamed him. For there I lurk upon the ocean’s floor, midway between the knees of either cliff, to guard the passage of the Straits from all the ships that seek the Further Seas; and whenever the white sails of the tall ships come swelling round the corner of the crag out of the sunlit spaces of the Known Sea and into the dark of the Straits, then standing firm upon the ocean’s floor, with my knees a little bent, I take the waters of the Straits in both my hands and whirl them round my head. But the ship comes gliding on with the sound of the sailors singing on her decks, all singing songs of the islands and carrying the rumour of their cities to the lonely seas, till they see me suddenly astride athwart their course, and are caught in the waters as I whirl them round my head. Then I draw in the waters of the Straits towards me and downwards, nearer and nearer to my terrible feet, and hear in my ears above the roar of my waters the ultimate cry of the ship; for just before I drag them to the floor of ocean and stamp them asunder with my wrecking feet, ships utter their ultimate cry, and with it go the lives of all the sailors and passes the soul of the ship. And in the ultimate cry of ships are the songs the sailors sing, and their hopes and all their loves, and the song of the wind among the masts and timbers when they stood in the forest long ago, and the whisper of the rain that made them grow, and the soul of the tall pine-tree or the oak. All this a ship gives up in one cry which she makes at the last. And at that moment I would pity the tall ship if I might; but a man may feel pity who sits in comfort by his fireside telling tales in the winter — no pity are they permitted ever to feel who do the work of the gods; and so when I have brought her circling from round my shoulders to my waist and thence, with her masts all sloping inwards, to my knees, and

lower still and downwards till her topmast pennants flutter against my ankles, then I, Nooz Wana, Whelmer of Ships, lift up my feet and trample her beams asunder, and there go up again to the surface of the Straits only a few broken timbers and the memories of the sailors and of their early loves to drift for ever down the empty seas.

'Once in every hundred years, for one day only, I go to rest myself along the shore and to sun my limbs on the sand, that the tall ships may go through the unguarded Straits and find the Happy Isles. And the Happy Isles stand midmost among the smiles of the sunny Further Seas, and there the sailors may come upon content and long for nothing; or if they long for aught, they shall possess it.

'There comes not Time with his devouring hours; nor any of the evils of the gods or men. These are the islands whereto the souls of the sailors every night put in from all the world to rest from going up and down the seas, to behold again the vision of far-off intimate hills that lift their orchards high above the fields facing the sunlight, and for a while again to speak with the souls of old. But about the dawn dreams twitter and arise, and circling thrice around the Happy Isles set out again to find the world of men, then follow the souls of the sailors, as, at evening, with slow stroke of stately wings the heron follows behind the flight of multitudinous rooks; but the souls returning find awakening bodies and endure the toil of the day. Such are the Happy Isles, whereunto few have come, save but as roaming shadows in the night, and for only a little while.

'But longer than is needed to make me strong and fierce again I may not stay, and at set of sun, when my arms are strong again, and when I feel in my legs that I can plant them fair and bent upon the floor of ocean, then I go back to take a new grip upon the waters of the Straits, and to guard the Further Seas again for a hundred years. Because the gods are jealous, lest too many men shall pass to the Happy Isles and find content. *For the gods have not content*.'

THE HURRICANE

One night I sat alone on the great down, looking over the edge of it at a murky, sullen city. All day long with its smoke it had troubled the holy sky, and now it sat there roaring in the distance and glared at me with its furnaces and lighted factory windows. Suddenly I became aware that I was not the only enemy of that city, for I perceived the colossal form of the Hurricane walking over the down towards me, playing idly with the flowers as he passed, and near me he stopped and spake to the Earthquake, who had come up mole-like but vast out of a cleft in the earth.

'Old friend,' said the Hurricane, 'rememberest when we wrecked the nations and drave the herds of the sea into new pasturage?'

'Yes,' said the Earthquake, drowsily; 'Yes, yes.'

'Old friend,' said the Hurricane, 'there are cities everywhere. Over thy head while thou didst sleep they have built them constantly. My four children the Winds suffocate with the fumes of them, the valleys are desolate of flowers, and the lovely forests are cut down since last we went abroad together.'

The Earthquake lay there, with his snout towards the city, blinking at the lights, while the tall Hurricane stood beside him pointing fiercely at it.

'Come,' said the Hurricane, 'let us fare forth again and destroy them, that all the lovely forests may come back and the furry creeping things. Thou shalt whelm these cities utterly and drive the people forth, and I will smite them in the shelterless places and sweep their desecrations from the sea. Wilt thou come forth with me and do this thing for the glory of it? Wilt thou wreck the world again as we did, thou and I, or ever Man had come? Wilt thou come forth to this place at this hour tomorrow night?'

'Yes,' said the Earthquake, 'Yes,' and he crept to his cleft again, and head foremost waddled down into the abysses.

When the Hurricane strode away, I got up quietly and departed, but at that hour of the next night I came up cautiously to the same spot. There I found the huge grey form of the Hurricane alone, with his head bowed in his hands, weeping; for the Earthquake sleeps long and heavily in the abysses, and he would not wake.

THE FORTRESS UNVANQUISHABLE, SAVE FOR SACNOTH

In a wood older than record, a foster brother of the hills, stood the village of Allathurion; and there was peace between the people of that village and all the folk who walked in the dark ways of the wood, whether they were human or of the tribes of the beasts or of the race of the fairies and the elves and the little sacred spirits of trees and streams. Moreover, the village people had peace among themselves and between them and their lord, Lorendiac. In front of the village was a wide and grassy space, and beyond this the great wood again, but at the back the trees came right up to the houses, which, with their great beams and wooden framework and thatched roofs, green with moss, seemed almost to be a part of the forest.

Now in the time I tell of, there was trouble in Allathurion, for of an evening fell dreams were wont to come slipping through the tree trunks and into the peaceful village; and they assumed dominion of men's minds and led them in watches of the night through the cindery plains of Hell. Then the magician of that village made spells against those fell dreams; yet still the dreams came flitting through the trees as soon as the dark had fallen, and led men's minds by night into terrible places and caused them to praise Satan openly with their lips.

And men grew afraid of sleep in Allathurion. And they grew worn and pale, some through the want of rest, and others from fear of the things they saw on the cindery plains of Hell.

Then the magician of the village went up into the tower of his house, and all night long those whom fear kept awake could see his window high up in the night glowing softly alone. The next day, when the twilight was far gone and night was gathering fast, the magician went away to the forest's edge, and uttered there the spell that he had made. And the spell was a compulsive, terrible thing, having a power over evil dreams and over spirits of ill; for it was a verse of forty lines in many languages, both living and dead, and had in it the word wherewith the people of the plains are wont to curse their camels, and the shout wherewith the whalers of the north lure the whales shoreward to be killed, and a word that causes elephants to trumpet; and every one of the forty lines closed with a rhyme for 'wasp'.

And still the dreams came flitting through the forest, and led men's souls into the plains of Hell. Then the magician knew that the dreams were from Gaznak. Therefore he gathered the people of the village, and told them that he had uttered his mightiest spell — a spell having power over all that were human or of the tribes of the beasts; and that since it had not availed the dreams must come from Gaznak, the greatest magician among the spaces of the stars. And he read to the people out of the Book of Magicians, which tells the comings of the comet and foretells his coming again. And he told them how Gaznak rides upon the comet, and how he visits Earth once in every two hundred and thirty years, and makes for himself a vast, invincible fortress and sends out dreams to feed on the minds of men, and may never be vanquished but by the sword Sacnoth.

And a cold fear fell on the hearts of the villagers when they found that their magician had failed them.

Then spake Leothric, son of the Lord Lorendiac, and twenty years old was he: 'Good Master, what of the sword Sacnoth?'

And the village magician answered: 'Fair Lord, no such sword as yet is wrought, for it lies as yet in the hide of Tharagavverug, protecting his spine.'

Then said Leothric: 'Who is Tharagavverug, and where may he be encountered?'

And the magician of Allathurion answered: 'He is the dragon-crocodile who haunts the Northern marshes and ravages the homesteads by their marge. And the hide of his back is of steel, and his under parts are of iron; but along the midst of his back, over his spine, there lies a narrow strip of unearthly steel. This strip of steel is Sacnoth, and it may be neither cleft nor molten, and there is nothing in the world that may avail to break it, nor even leave a scratch upon its surface. It is of the length of a good sword, and of the breadth thereof. Shouldst thou prevail against Tharagavverug, his hide may be melted away from Sacnoth in a furnace; but there is only one thing that may sharpen Sacnoth's edge, and this is one of Tharagavverug's own steel eyes; and the other eye thou must fasten to Sacnoth's hilt, and it will watch for thee. But it is a hard task to vanquish Tharagavverug, for no sword can pierce his hide; his back cannot be broken, and he can neither burn nor drown. In one way only can Tharagavverug die, and that is by starving.'

Then sorrow fell upon Leothric, but the magician spoke on:

‘If a man drive Tharagavverug away from his food with a stick for three days, he will starve on the third day at sunset. And though he is not vulnerable, yet in one spot he may take hurt, for his nose is only of lead. A sword would merely lay bare the uncleavable bronze beneath, but if his nose be smitten constantly with a stick he will always recoil from the pain, and thus may Tharagavverug, to left and right, be driven away from his food.’

Then Leothric said: ‘What is Tharagavverug’s food?’

And the magician of Allathurion said: ‘His food is men.’

But Leothric went straightway thence, and cut a great staff from a hazel tree, and slept early that evening. But the next morning, awaking from troubled dreams, he arose before the dawn, and, taking with him provisions for five days, set out through the forest northwards towards the marshes. For some hours he moved through the gloom of the forest, and when he emerged from it the sun was above the horizon shining on pools of water in the waste land. Presently he saw the claw-marks of Tharagavverug deep in the soil, and the track of his tail between them like a furrow in a field. Then Leothric followed the tracks till he heard the bronze heart of Tharagavverug before him, booming like a bell.

And Tharagavverug, it being the hour when he took the first meal of the day, was moving towards a village with his heart tolling. And all the people of the village were come out to meet him, as it was their wont to do; for they abode not the suspense of awaiting Tharagavverug and of hearing him sniffing brazenly as he went from door to door, pondering slowly in his metal mind what habitant he should choose. And none dared to flee, for in the days when the villagers fled from Tharagavverug, he, having chosen his victim, would track him tirelessly, like a doom. Nothing availed them against Tharagavverug. Once they climbed the trees when he came, but Tharagavverug went up to one, arching his back and leaning over slightly, and rasped against the trunk until it fell. And when Leothric came near, Tharagavverug saw him out of one of his small steel eyes and came towards him leisurely, and the echoes of his heart swirled up through his open mouth. And Leothric stepped sideways from his onset, and came between him and the village and smote him on the nose, and the blow of the stick made a dint in the soft lead. And Tharagavverug swung clumsily away, uttering one fearful cry like the sound of a great church bell that had become possessed of a soul that fluttered upward from the tombs at night —

an evil soul, giving the bell a voice. Then he attacked Leothric, snarling, and again Leothric leapt aside, and smote him on the nose with his stick. Tharagavverug uttered like a bell howling. And whenever the dragon-crocodile attacked him, or turned towards the village, Leothric smote him again.

So all day long Leothric drove the monster with a stick, and he drove him farther and farther from his prey, with his heart tolling angrily and his voice crying out for pain.

Towards evening Tharagavverug ceased to snap at Leothric, but ran before him to avoid the stick, for his nose was sore and shining; and in the gloaming the villagers came out and danced to cymbal and psaltery. When Tharagavverug heard the cymbal and psaltery, hunger and anger came upon him, and he felt as some lord might feel who was held by force from the banquet in his own castle and heard the creaking spit go round and round and the good meat crackling on it. And all that night he attacked Leothric fiercely, and oft-times nearly caught him in the darkness; for his gleaming eyes of steel could see as well by night as by day. And Leothric gave ground slowly till the dawn, and when the light came they were near the village again; yet not so near to it as they had been when they encountered, for Leothric drove Tharagavverug farther in the day than Tharagavverug had forced him back in the night. Then Leothric drove him again with his stick till the hour came when it was the custom of the dragon-crocodile to find his man. One third of his man he would eat at the time he found him, and the rest at noon and evening. But when the hour came for finding his man a great fierceness came on Tharagavverug, and he grabbed rapidly at Leothric, but could not seize him, and for a long while neither of them would retire. But at last the pain of the stick on his leaden nose overcame the hunger of the dragon-crocodile, and he turned from it howling. From that moment Tharagavverug weakened. All that day Leothric drove him with his stick, and at night both held their ground; and when the dawn of the third day was come the heart of Tharagavverug beat slower and fainter. It was as though a tired man was ringing a bell. Once Tharagavverug nearly seized a frog, but Leothric snatched it away just in time. Towards noon the dragon-crocodile lay still for a long while, and Leothric stood near him and leaned on his trusty stick. He was very tired and sleepless, but had more leisure now for eating his provisions. With Tharagavverug the end was coming fast, and in the afternoon his breath came hoarsely, rasping in his

throat. It was as the sound of many huntsmen blowing blasts on horns, and towards evening his breath came faster but fainter, like the sound of a hunt going furious to the distance and dying away, and he made desperate rushes towards the village; but Leothric still leapt about him, battering his leaden nose. Scarce audible now at all was the sound of his heart: it was like a church bell tolling beyond hills for the death of some one unknown and far away. Then the sun set and flamed in the village windows, and a chill went over the world, and in some small garden a woman sang; and Tharagavverug lifted up his head and starved, and his life went from his invulnerable body, and Leothric lay down beside him and slept. And later in the starlight the villagers came out and carried Leothric, sleeping, to the village, all praising him in whispers as they went. They laid him down upon a couch in a house, and danced outside in silence, without psaltery or cymbal. And the next day, rejoicing, to Allathurion they hauled the dragon-crocodile. And Leothric went with them, holding his battered staff; and a tall, broad man, who was smith of Allathurion, made a great furnace, and melted Tharagavverug away till only Sacnoth was left, gleaming among the ashes. Then he took one of the small eyes that had been chiselled out, and filed an edge on Sacnoth, and gradually the steel eye wore away facet by facet, but ere it was quite gone it had sharpened redoubtably Sacnoth. But the other eye they set in the butt of the hilt, and it gleamed there bluely.

And that night Leothric arose in the dark and took the sword, and went westwards to find Gaznak; and he went through the dark forest till the dawn, and all the morning and till the afternoon. But in the afternoon he came into the open and saw in the midst of The Land Where No Man Goeth the fortress of Gaznak, mountainous before him, little more than a mile away.

And Leothric saw that the land was marsh and desolate. And the fortress went up all white out of it, with many buttresses, and was broad below but narrowed higher up, and was full of gleaming windows with the light upon them. And near the top of it a few white clouds were floating, but above them some of its pinnacles reappeared. Then Leothric advanced into the marshes, and the eye of Tharagavverug looked out warily from the hilt of Sacnoth; for Tharagavverug had known the marshes well, and the sword nudged Leothric to the right or pulled him to the left away from the dangerous places, and so brought him safely to the fortress walls.

And in the wall stood doors like precipices of steel, all studded with boulders of iron, and above every window were terrible gargoyles of stone; and the name of the fortress shone on the wall, writ large in letters of brass: ‘The Fortress Unvanquishable, Save For Sacnoth.’

Then Leothric drew and revealed Sacnoth, and all the gargoyles grinned, and the grin went flickering from face to face right up into the cloud-abiding gables.

And when Sacnoth was revealed and all the gargoyles grinned, it was like the moonlight emerging from a cloud to look for the first time upon a field of blood, and passing swiftly over the wet faces of the slain that lie together in the horrible night. Then Leothric advanced towards a door, and it was mightier than the marble quarry, Sacremona, from which of old men cut enormous slabs to build the Abbey of the Holy Tears. Day after day they wrenched out the very ribs of the hill until the Abbey was builded, and it was more beautiful than anything in stone. Then the priests blessed Sacremona, and it had rest, and no more stone was ever taken from it to build the houses of men. And the hill stood looking southwards lonely in the sunlight, defaced by that mighty scar. So vast was the door of steel. And the name of the door was The Porte Resonant, the Way of Egress for War.

Then Leothric smote upon the Porte Resonant with Sacnoth, and the echo of Sacnoth went ringing through the halls, and all the dragons in the fortress barked. And when the baying of the remotest dragon had faintly joined in the tumult, a window opened far up among the clouds below the twilit gables, and a woman screamed, and far away in Hell her father heard her and knew that her doom was come.

And Leothric went on smiting terribly with Sacnoth, and the grey steel of the Porte Resonant, the Way of Egress for War, that was tempered to resist the swords of the world, came away in ringing slices.

Then Leothric, holding Sacnoth in his hand, went in through the hole that he had hewn in the door, and came into the unlit, cavernous hall.

An elephant fled trumpeting. And Leothric stood still, holding Sacnoth. When the sound of the feet of the elephant had died away in the remoter corridors, nothing more stirred, and the cavernous hall was still.

Presently the darkness of the distant halls became musical with the sound of bells, all coming nearer and nearer.

Still Leothric waited in the dark, and the bells rang louder and louder, echoing through the halls, and there appeared a procession of men on

camels riding two by two from the interior of the fortress, and they were armed with scimitars of Assyrian make and were all clad with mail, and chain-mail hung from their helmets about their faces, and flapped as the camels moved. And they all halted before Leothric in the cavernous hall, and the camel bells clanged and stopped. And the leader said to Leothric:

‘The Lord Gaznak has desired to see you die before him. Be pleased to come with us, and we can discourse by the way of the manner in which the Lord Gaznak has desired to see you die.’

And as he said this he unwound a chain of iron that was coiled upon his saddle, and Leothric answered:

‘I would fain go with you, for I am come to slay Gaznak.’

Then all the camel-guard of Gaznak laughed hideously, disturbing the vampires that were asleep in the measureless vault of the roof. And the leader said:

‘The Lord Gaznak is immortal, save for Sacnoth, and weareth armour that is proof even against Sacnoth himself, and hath a sword the second most terrible in the world.’

Then Leothric said: ‘I am the Lord of the sword Sacnoth.’

And he advanced towards the camel-guard of Gaznak, and Sacnoth lifted up and down in his hand as though stirred by an exultant pulse. Then the camel-guard of Gaznak fled, and the riders leaned forward and smote their camels with whips, and they went away with a great clamour of bells through colonnades and corridors and vaulted halls, and scattered into the inner darknesses of the fortress. When the last sound of them had died away, Leothric was in doubt which way to go, for the camel-guard was dispersed in many directions, so he went straight on till he came to a great stairway in the midst of the hall. Then Leothric set his foot in the middle of a wide step, and climbed steadily up the stairway for five minutes. Little light was there in the great hall through which Leothric ascended, for it only entered through arrow slits here and there, and in the world outside evening was waning fast. The stairway led up to two folding doors, and they stood a little ajar, and through the crack Leothric entered and tried to continue straight on, but could get no farther, for the whole room seemed to be full of festoons of ropes which swung from wall to wall and were looped and draped from the ceiling. The whole chamber was thick and black with them. They were soft and light to the touch, like fine silk, but Leothric was unable to break any one of them, and though they swung away from him as he

pressed forward, yet by the time he had gone three yards they were all about him like a heavy cloak. Then Leothric stepped back and drew Sacnoth, and Sacnoth divided the ropes without a sound, and without a sound the severed pieces fell to the floor. Leothric went forward slowly, moving Sacnoth in front of him up and down as he went. When he was come into the middle of the chamber, suddenly, as he parted with Sacnoth a great hammock of strands, he saw a spider before him that was larger than a ram, and the spider looked at him with eyes that were little, but in which there was much sin, and said:

'Who are you that spoil the labour of years all done to the honour of Satan?'

And Leothric answered: 'I am Leothric, son of Lorendiac.'

And the spider said: 'I will make a rope at once to hang you with.'

Then Leothric parted another bunch of strands, and came nearer to the spider as he sat making his rope, and the spider, looking up from his work, said: 'What is that sword which is able to sever my ropes?'

And Leothric said: 'It is Sacnoth.'

Thereat the black hair that hung over the face of the spider parted to left and right, and the spider frowned; then the hair fell back into its place, and hid everything except the sin of the little eyes which went on gleaming lustfully in the dark. But before Leothric could reach him, he climbed away with his hands, going up by one of his ropes to a lofty rafter, and there sat, growling. But clearing his way with Sacnoth, Leothric passed through the chamber, and came to the farther door; and the door being shut, and the handle far up out of his reach, he hewed his way through it with Sacnoth in the same way as he had through the Porte Resonant, the Way of Egress for War. And so Leothric came into a well-lit chamber, where Queens and Princes were banqueting together, all at a great table; and thousands of candles were glowing all about, and their light shone in the wine that the Princes drank and on the huge gold candelabra, and the royal faces were irradiant with the glow, and the white table-cloth and the silver plates and the jewels in the hair of the Queens, each jewel having a historian all to itself, who wrote no other chronicles all his days. Between the table and the door there stood two hundred footmen in two rows of one hundred facing one another. Nobody looked at Leothric as he entered through the hole in the door, but one of the Princes asked a question of a footman, and the question was passed from mouth to mouth by all the hundred footmen till it

came to the last one nearest Leothric; and he said to Leothric, without looking at him:

‘What do you seek here?’

And Leothric answered: ‘I seek to slay Gaznak.’

And footman to footman repeated all the way to the table: ‘He seeks to slay Gaznak.’

And another question came down the line of footmen: ‘What is your name?’

And the line that stood opposite took his answer back.

Then one of the Princes said: ‘Take him away where we shall not hear his screams.’

And footman repeated it to footman till it came to the last two, and they advanced to seize Leothric.

Then Leothric showed to them his sword, saying, ‘This is Sacnoth,’ and both of them said to the man nearest: ‘It is Sacnoth;’ then screamed and fled away.

And two by two, all up the double line, footman to footman repeated, ‘It is Sacnoth,’ then screamed and fled, till the last two gave the message to the table, and all the rest had gone. Hurriedly then arose the Queens and Princes, and fled out of the chamber. And the goodly table, when they were all gone, looked small and disorderly and awry. And to Leothric, pondering in the desolate chamber by what door he should pass onwards, there came from far away the sounds of music, and he knew that it was the magical musicians playing to Gaznak while he slept.

Then Leothric, walking towards the distant music, passed out by the door opposite to the one through which he had cloven his entrance, and so passed into a chamber vast as the other, in which were many women, weirdly beautiful. And they all asked him of his quest, and when they heard that it was to slay Gaznak, they all besought him to tarry among them, saying that Gaznak was immortal, save for Sacnoth, and also that they had need of a knight to protect them from the wolves that rushed round and round the wainscot all the night and sometimes broke in upon them through the mouldering oak. Perhaps Leothric had been tempted to tarry had they been human women, for theirs was a strange beauty, but he perceived that instead of eyes they had little flames that flickered in their sockets, and knew them to be the fevered dreams of Gaznak. Therefore he said:

‘I have a business with Gaznak and with Sacnoth,’ and passed on through the chamber.

And at the name of Sacnoth those women screamed, and the flames of their eyes sank low and dwindled to sparks.

And Leothric left them, and, hewing with Sacnoth, passed through the farther door.

Outside he felt the night air on his face, and found that he stood upon a narrow way between two abysses. To left and right of him, as far as he could see, the walls of the fortress ended in a profound precipice, though the roof still stretched above him; and before him lay the two abysses full of stars, for they cut their way through the whole Earth and revealed the under sky; and threading its course between them went the way, and it sloped upward and its sides were sheer. And beyond the abysses, where the way led up to the farther chambers of the fortress, Leothric heard the musicians playing their magical tune. So he stepped on to the way, which was scarcely a stride in width, and moved along it holding Sacnoth naked. And to and fro beneath him in each abyss whirred the wings of vampires passing up and down, all giving praise to Satan as they flew. Presently he perceived the dragon Thok lying upon the way, pretending to sleep, and his tail hung down into one of the abysses.

And Leothric went towards him, and when he was quite close Thok rushed at Leothric.

And he smote deep with Sacnoth, and Thok tumbled into the abyss, screaming, and his limbs made a whirring in the darkness as he fell, and he fell till his scream sounded no louder than a whistle and then could be heard no more. Once or twice Leothric saw a star blink for an instant and reappear again, and this momentary eclipse of a few stars was all that remained in the world of the body of Thok. And Lunk, the brother of Thok, who had lain a little behind him, saw that this must be Sacnoth and fled lumbering away. And all the while that he walked between the abysses, the mighty vault of the roof of the fortress still stretched over Leothric’s head, all filled with gloom. Now, when the further side of the abyss came into view, Leothric saw a chamber that opened with innumerable arches upon the twin abysses, and the pillars of the arches went away into the distance and vanished in the gloom to left and right.

Far down the dim precipice on which the pillars stood he could see windows small and closely barred, and between the bars there showed at

moments, and disappeared again, things that I shall not speak of.

There was no light here except for the great Southern stars that shone below the abysses, and here and there in the chamber through the arches lights that moved furtively without the sound of footfall.

Then Leothric stepped from the way, and entered the great chamber.

Even to himself he seemed but a tiny dwarf as he walked under one of those colossal arches.

The last faint light of evening flickered through a window painted in sombre colours commemorating the achievements of Satan upon Earth. High up in the wall the window stood, and the streaming lights of candles lower down moved stealthily away.

Other light there was none, save for a faint blue glow from the steel eye of Tharagavverug that peered restlessly about it from the hilt of Sacnoth. Heavily in the chamber hung the clammy odour of a large and deadly beast.

Leothric moved forward slowly with the blade of Sacnoth in front of him feeling for a foe, and the eye in the hilt of it looking out behind.

Nothing stirred.

If anything lurked behind the pillars of the colonnade that held aloft the roof, it neither breathed nor moved.

The music of the magical musicians sounded from very near.

Suddenly the great doors on the far side of the chamber opened to left and right. For some moments Leothric saw nothing move, and waited clutching Sacnoth. Then Wong Bongerok came towards him, breathing.

This was the last and faithfullest guard of Gaznak, and came from slobbering just now his master’s hand.

More as a child than a dragon was Gaznak wont to treat him, giving him often in his fingers tender pieces of man all smoking from his table.

Long and low was Wong Bongerok, and subtle about the eyes, and he came breathing malice against Leothric out of his faithful breast, and behind him roared the armoury of his tail, as when sailors drag the cable of the anchor all rattling down the deck.

And well Wong Bongerok knew that he now faced Sacnoth, for it had been his wont to prophesy quietly to himself for many years as he lay curled at the feet of Gaznak.

And Leothric stepped forward into the blast of his breath, and lifted Sacnoth to strike.

But when Sacnoth was lifted up, the eye of Tharagavverug in the butt of the hilt beheld the dragon and perceived his subtlety.

For he opened his mouth wide, and revealed to Leothric the ranks of his sabre teeth, and his leather gums flapped upwards. But while Leothric made to smite at his head, he shot forward scorpion-wise over his head the length of his armoured tail. All this the eye perceived in the hilt of Sacnoth, who smote suddenly sideways. Not with the edge smote Sacnoth, for, had he done so, the severed end of the tail had still come hurtling on, as some pine tree that the avalanche has hurled point foremost from the cliff right through the broad breast of some mountaineer. So had Leothric been transfixed; but Sacnoth smote sideways with the flat of his blade, and sent the tail whizzing over Leothric's left shoulder; and it rasped upon his armour as it went, and left a groove upon it. Sideways then at Leothric smote the foiled tail of Wong Bongerok, and Sacnoth parried, and the tail went shrieking up the blade and over Leothric's head. Then Leothric and Wong Bongerok fought sword to tooth, and the sword smote as only Sacnoth can, and the evil faithful life of Wong Bongerok the dragon went out through the wide wound.

Then Leothric walked on past that dead monster, and the armoured body still quivered a little. And for a while it was like all the ploughshares in a county working together in one field behind tired and struggling horses; then the quivering ceased, and Wong Bongerok lay still to rust.

And Leothric went on to the open gates, and Sacnoth dripped quietly along the floor.

By the open gates through which Wong Bongerok had entered, Leothric came into a corridor echoing with music. This was the first place from which Leothric could see anything above his head, for hitherto the roof had ascended to mountainous heights and had stretched indistinct in the gloom. But along the narrow corridor hung huge bells low and near to his head, and the width of each brazen bell was from wall to wall, and they were one behind the other. And as he passed under each the bell uttered, and its voice was mournful and deep, like to the voice of a bell speaking to a man for the last time when he is newly dead. Each bell uttered once as Leothric came under it, and their voices sounded solemnly and wide apart at ceremonious intervals. For if he walked slow, these bells came closer together, and when he walked swiftly they moved farther apart. And the echoes of each bell

tolling above his head went on before him whispering to the others. Once when he stopped they all jangled angrily till he went on again.

Between these slow and boding notes came the sound of the magical musicians. They were playing a dirge now very mournfully.

And at last Leothric came to the end of the Corridor of the Bells, and beheld there a small black door. And all the corridor behind him was full of the echoes of the tolling, and they all muttered to one another about the ceremony; and the dirge of the musicians came floating slowly through them like a procession of foreign elaborate guests, and all of them boded ill to Leothric.

The black door opened at once to the hand of Leothric, and he found himself in the open air in a wide court paved with marble. High over it shone the moon, summoned there by the hand of Gaznak.

There Gaznak slept, and around him sat his magical musicians, all playing upon strings. And, even sleeping, Gaznak was clad in armour, and only his wrists and face and neck were bare.

But the marvel of that place was the dreams of Gaznak; for beyond the wide court slept a dark abyss, and into the abyss there poured a white cascade of marble stairways, and widened out below into terraces and balconies with fair white statues on them, and descended again in a wide stairway, and came to lower terraces in the dark, where swart uncertain shapes went to and fro. All these were the dreams of Gaznak, and issued from his mind, and, becoming gleaming marble, passed over the edge of the abyss as the musicians played. And all the while out of the mind of Gaznak, lulled by that strange music, went spires and pinnacles beautiful and slender, ever ascending skywards. And the marble dreams moved slow in time to the music. When the bells tolled and the musicians played their dirge, ugly gargoyles came out suddenly all over the spires and pinnacles, and great shadows passed swiftly down the steps and terraces, and there was hurried whispering in the abyss.

When Leothric stepped from the black door, Gaznak opened his eyes.
He looked neither to left nor right, but stood up at once facing
Leothric.

Then the magicians played a deathspell on their strings, and there arose a humming along the blade of Sacnoth as he turned the spell aside. When

Leothric dropped not down, and they heard the humming of Sacnoth, the magicians arose and fled, all wailing, as they went, upon their strings.

Then Gaznak drew out screaming from its sheath the sword that was the mightiest in the world except for Sacnoth, and slowly walked towards Leothric; and he smiled as he walked, although his own dreams had foretold his doom. And when Leothric and Gaznak came together, each looked at each, and neither spoke a word; but they smote both at once, and their swords met, and each sword knew the other and from whence he came. And whenever the sword of Gaznak smote on the blade of Sacnoth it rebounded gleaming, as hail from off slated roofs; but whenever it fell upon the armour of Leothric, it stripped it off in sheets. And upon Gaznak's armour Sacnoth fell oft and furiously, but ever he came back snarling, leaving no mark behind, and as Gaznak fought he held his left hand hovering close over his head. Presently Leothric smote fair and fiercely at his enemy's neck, but Gaznak, clutching his own head by the hair, lifted it high aloft, and Sacnoth went cleaving through an empty space. Then Gaznak replaced his head upon his neck, and all the while fought nimbly with his sword; and again and again Leothric swept with Sacnoth at Gaznak's bearded neck, and ever the left hand of Gaznak was quicker than the stroke, and the head went up and the sword rushed vainly under it.

And the ringing fight went on till Leothric's armour lay all round him on the floor and the marble was splashed with his blood, and the sword of Gaznak was notched like a saw from meeting the blade of Sacnoth. Still Gaznak stood unwounded and smiling still.

At last Leothric looked at the throat of Gaznak and aimed with Sacnoth, and again Gaznak lifted his head by the hair; but not at his throat flew Sacnoth, for Leothric struck instead at the lifted hand, and through the wrist of it went Sacnoth whirring, as a scythe goes through the stem of a single flower.

And bleeding, the severed hand fell to the floor; and at once blood spurted from the shoulders of Gaznak and dripped from the fallen head, and the tall pinnacles went down into the earth, and the wide fair terraces all rolled away, and the court was gone like the dew, and a wind came and the colonnades drifted thence, and all the colossal halls of Gaznak fell. And the abysses closed up suddenly as the mouth of a man who, having told a tale, will for ever speak no more.

Then Leothric looked around him in the marshes where the night mist was passing away, and there was no fortress nor sound of dragon or mortal, only beside him lay an old man, wizened and evil and dead, whose head and hand were severed from his body.

And gradually over the wide lands the dawn was coming up, and ever growing in beauty as it came, like to the peal of an organ played by a master's hand, growing louder and lovelier as the soul of the master warms, and at last giving praise with all its mighty voice.

Then the birds sang, and Leothric went homeward, and left the marshes and came to the dark wood, and the light of the dawn ascending lit him upon his way. And into Allathurion he came ere noon, and with him brought the evil wizened head, and the people rejoiced, and their nights of trouble ceased.

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This is the tale of the vanquishing of The Fortress Unvanquishable, Save For Sacnoth, and of its passing away, as it is told and believed by those who love the mystic days of old.

Others have said, and vainly claim to prove, that a fever came to Allathurion, and went away; and that this same fever drove Leothric into the marshes by night, and made him dream there and act violently with a sword.

And others again say that there hath been no town of Allathurion, and that Leothric never lived.

Peace to them. The gardener hath gathered up this autumn's leaves. Who shall see them again, or who wot of them? And who shall say what hath befallen in the days of long ago?

THE LORD OF CITIES

I came one day upon a road that wandered so aimlessly that it was suited to my mood, so I followed it, and it led me presently among deep woods. Somewhere in the midst of them Autumn held his court, sitting wreathed with gorgeous garlands; and it was the day before his annual festival of the Dance of Leaves, the courtly festival upon which hungry Winter rushes mob-like, and there arise the furious cries of the North Wind triumphing, and all the splendour and grace of the woods is gone, and Autumn flees away, discrowned and forgotten, and never again returns. Other Autumns arise, other Autumns, and fall before other Winters. A road led away to the left, but my road went straight on. The road to the left had a trodden appearance; there were wheel tracks on it, and it seemed the correct way to take. It looked as if no one could have any business with the road that led straight on and up the hill. Therefore I went straight on and up the hill; and here and there on the road grew blades of grass undisturbed in the repose and hush that the road had earned from going up and down the world; for you can go by this road, as you can go by all roads, to London, to Lincoln, to the North of Scotland, to the West of Wales, and to Wrellisford where roads end. Presently the woods ended, and I came to the open fields and at the same moment to the top of the hill, and saw the high places of Somerset and the downs of Wilts spread out along the horizon. Suddenly I saw underneath me the village of Wrellisford, with no sound in its street but the voice of the Wrellis roaring as he tumbled over a weir above the village. So I followed my road down over the crest of the hill, and the road became more languid as I descended, and less and less concerned with the cares of a highway. Here a spring broke out in the middle of it, and here another. The road never heeded. A stream ran right across it, still it straggled on. Suddenly it gave up the minimum property that a road should possess, and, renouncing its connection with High Streets, its lineage of Piccadilly, shrank to one side and became an unpretentious footpath. Then it led me to the old bridge over the stream, and thus I came to Wrellisford, and found after travelling in many lands a village with no wheel tracks in its street. On the other side of the bridge, my friend the road struggled a few yards up a grassy slope, and there ceased. Over all the village hung a great stillness, with the roar of the Wrellis cutting right across it, and there came

occasionally the bark of a dog that kept watch over the broken stillness and over the sanctity of that untravelled road. That terrible and wasting fever that, unlike so many plagues, comes not from the East but from the West, the fever of hurry, had not come here — only the Wrellis hurried on his eternal quest, but it was a calm and placid hurry that gave one time for song. It was in the early afternoon, and nobody was about. Either they worked beyond the mysterious valley that nursed Wrellisford and hid it from the world, or else they secluded themselves within their old-time houses that were roofed with tiles of stone. I sat down upon the old stone bridge and watched the Wrellis, who seemed to me to be the only traveller that came from far away into this village where roads end, and passed on beyond it. And yet the Wrellis comes singing out of eternity, and tarries for a very little while in the village where roads end, and passes on into eternity again; and so surely do all that dwell in Wrellisford. I wondered as I leaned upon the bridge in what place the Wrellis would first find the sea, whether as he wound idly through meadows on his long quest he would suddenly behold him, and, leaping down over some rocky cliff, take to him at once the message of the hills. Or whether, widening slowly into some grand and tidal estuary, he would take his waste of waters to the sea and the might of the river should meet with the might of the waves, like to two Emperors clad in gleaming mail meeting midway between two hosts of war; and the little Wrellis would become a haven for returning ships and a setting-out place for adventurous men.

A little beyond the bridge there stood an old mill with a ruined roof, and a small branch of the Wrellis rushed through its emptiness shouting, like a boy playing alone in a corridor of some desolate house. The mill-wheel was gone, but there lay there still great bars and wheels and cogs, the bones of some dead industry. I know not what industry was once lord in that house, I know not what retinue of workers mourns him now; I only know who is lord there today in all those empty chambers. For as soon as I entered, I saw a whole wall draped with his marvellous black tapestry, without price because inimitable and too delicate to pass from hand to hand among merchants. I looked at the wonderful complexity of its infinite threads, my finger sank into it for more than an inch without feeling the touch; so black it was and so carefully wrought, sombrely covering the whole of the wall, that it might have been worked to commemorate the deaths of all that ever lived there, as indeed it was. I looked through a hole in the wall into an

inner chamber where a worn-out driving band went among many wheels, and there this priceless inimitable stuff not merely clothed the walls but hung from bars and ceiling in beautiful draperies, in marvellous festoons. Nothing was ugly in this desolate house, for the busy artist's soul of its present lord had beautified everything in its desolation. It was the unmistakable work of the spider, in whose house I was, and the house was utterly desolate but for him, and silent but for the roar of the Wrellis and the shout of the little stream. Then I turned homewards; and as I went up and over the hill and lost the sight of the village, I saw the road whiten and harden and gradually broaden out till the tracks of wheels appeared; and it went afar to take the young men of Wrellisford into the wide ways of the earth — to the new West and the mysterious East, and into the troubled South.

And that night, when the house was still and sleep was far off, hushing hamlets and giving ease to cities, my fancy wandered up that aimless road and came suddenly to Wrellisford. And it seemed to me that the travelling of so many people for so many years between Wrellisford and John o' Groat's, talking to one another as they went or muttering alone, had given the road a voice. And it seemed to me that night that the road spoke to the river by Wrellisford bridge, speaking with the voice of many pilgrims. And the road said to the river: 'I rest here. How is it with you?'

And the river, who is always speaking, said: 'I rest nowhere from doing the Work of the World. I carry the murmur of inner lands to the sea, and to the abysses voices of the hills.'

'It is I,' said the road, 'that do the Work of the World, and take from city to city the rumour of each. There is nothing higher than Man and the making of cities. What do you do for Man?'

And the river said: 'Beauty and song are higher than Man. I carry the news seaward of the first song of the thrush after the furious retreat of winter northward, and the first timid anemone learns from me that she is safe and that spring has truly come. Oh but the song of all the birds in spring is more beautiful than Man, and the first coming of the hyacinth more delectable than his face! When spring is fallen upon the days of summer, I carry away with mournful joy at night petal by petal the rhododendron's bloom. No lit procession of purple kings is nigh so fair as that. No beautiful death of well-beloved men hath such a glory of forlornness. And I bear far away the pink and white petals of the apple-

blossom's youth when the laborious time comes for his work in the world and for the bearing of apples. And I am robed each day and every night anew with the beauty of heaven, and I make lovely visions of the trees. But Man! What is Man? In the ancient parliament of the elder hills, when the grey ones speak together, they say nought of Man, but concern themselves only with their brethren the stars. Or when they wrap themselves in purple cloaks at evening, they lament some old irreparable wrong, or, uttering some mountain hymn, all mourn the set of sun.'

'Your beauty,' said the road, 'and the beauty of the sky, and of the rhododendron blossom and of spring, live only in the mind of Man, and except in the mind of Man the mountains have no voices. Nothing is beautiful that has not been seen by Man's eye. Or if your rhododendron blossom was beautiful for a moment, it soon withered and was drowned, and spring soon passes away; beauty can only live on in the mind of Man. I bring thought into the mind of Man swiftly from distant places every day. I know the Telegraph — I know him well; he and I have walked for hundreds of miles together. There is no work in the world except for Man and the making of his cities. I take wares to and fro from city to city.'

'My little stream in the field there,' said the river, 'used to make wares in that house for awhile once.'

'Ah,' said the road, 'I remember, but I brought cheaper ones from distant cities. Nothing is of any importance but making cities for Man.'

'I know so little about him,' said the river, 'but I have a great deal of work to do — I have all this water to send down to the sea; and then tomorrow or next day all the leaves of Autumn will be coming this way. It will be very beautiful. The sea is a very, very wonderful place. I know all about it; I have heard shepherd boys singing of it, and sometimes before a storm the gulls come up. It is a place all blue and shining and full of pearls, and has in it coral islands and isles of spice, and storms and galleons and the bones of Drake. The sea is much greater than Man. When I come to the sea, he will know that I have worked well for him. But I must hurry, for I have much to do. This bridge delays me a little; some day I will carry it away.'

'Oh, you must not do that,' said the road.

'Oh, not for a long time,' said the river. 'Some centuries perhaps — and I have much to do besides. There is my song to sing, for instance, and that alone is more beautiful than any noise that Man makes.'

‘All work is for Man,’ said the road, ‘and for the building of cities. There is no beauty or romance or mystery in the sea except for the men that sail abroad upon it, and for those that stay at home and dream of them. As for your song, it rings night and morning, year in, year out, in the ears of men that are born in Wrellisford; at night it is part of their dreams, at morning it is the voice of day, and so it becomes part of their souls. But the song is not beautiful in itself. I take these men with your song in their souls up over the edge of the valley and a long way off beyond, and I am a strong and dusty road up there, and they go with your song in their souls and turn it into music and gladden cities. But nothing is the Work of the World except work for Man.’

‘I wish I was quite sure about the Work of the World,’ said the stream; ‘I wish I knew for certain for whom we work. I feel almost sure that it is for the sea. He is very great and beautiful. I think that there can be no greater master than the sea. I think that some day he may be so full of romance and mystery and sound of sheep bells and murmur of mist-hidden hills, which we streams shall have brought him, that there will be no more music or beauty left in the world, and all the world will end; and perhaps the streams shall gather at the last, we all together, to the sea. Or perhaps the sea will give us at the last unto each one his own again, giving back all that he has garnered in the years — the little petals of the apple-blossom and the mourned ones of the rhododendron, and our old visions of the trees and sky; so many memories have left the hills. But who may say? For who knows the tides of the sea?’

‘Be sure that it is all for Man,’ said the road. ‘For Man and the making of cities.’

Something had come near on utterly silent feet.

‘Peace, peace!’ it said. ‘You disturb the queenly night, who, having come into this valley, is a guest in my dark halls. Let us have an end to this discussion.’

It was the spider who spoke.

‘The Work of the World is the making of cities and palaces. But it is not for Man. What is Man? He only prepares my cities for me, and mellows them. All his works are ugly, his richest tapestries are coarse and clumsy. He is a noisy idler. He only protects me from mine enemy the wind; and the beautiful work in my cities, the curving outlines and the delicate weavings, is all mine. Ten years to a hundred it takes to build a city, for five or six

hundred more it mellows, and is prepared for me; then I inhabit it, and hide away all that is ugly, and draw beautiful lines about it to and fro. There is nothing so beautiful as cities and palaces; they are the loveliest places in the world, because they are the stillest, and so most like the stars. They are noisy at first, for a little, before I come to them; they have ugly corners not yet rounded off, and coarse tapestries, and then they become ready for me and my exquisite work, and are quite silent and beautiful. And there I entertain the regal nights when they come there jewelled with stars, and all their train of silence, and regale them with costly dust. Already nods, in a city that I wot of, a lonely sentinel whose lords are dead, who grows too old and sleepy to drive away the gathering silence that infests the streets; tomorrow I go to see if he be still at his post. For me Babylon was built, and rocky Tyre; and still men build my cities! All the Work of the World is the making of cities, and all of them I inherit.’

THE DOOM OF LA TRAVIATA

Evening stole up out of mysterious lands and came down on the streets of Paris, and the things of the day withdrew themselves and hid away, and the beautiful city was strangely altered, and with it the hearts of men. And with lights and music, and in silence and in the dark, the other life arose, the life that knows the night, and dark cats crept from the houses and moved to silent places, and dim streets became haunted with dusk shapes. At this hour in a mean house, near to the Moulin Rouge, La Traviata died; and her death was brought to her by her own sins, and not by the years of God. But the soul of La Traviata drifted blindly about the streets where she had sinned till it struck against the wall of Notre Dame de Paris. Thence it rushed upwards, as the sea mist when it beats against a cliff, and streamed away to Paradise, and was there judged. And it seemed to me, as I watched from my place of dreaming, when La Traviata came and stood before the seat of judgment, that clouds came rushing up from the far Paradisal hills and gathered together over the head of God, and became one black cloud; and the clouds moved swiftly as shadows of the night when a lantern is swung in the hand, and more and more clouds rushed up, and ever more and more, and, as they gathered, the cloud a little above the head of God became no larger, but only grew blacker and blacker. And the halos of the saints settled lower upon their heads and narrowed and became pale, and the singing of the choirs of the seraphim faltered and sunk low, and the converse of the blessed suddenly ceased. Then a stern look came into the face of God, so that the seraphim turned away and left Him, and the saints. Then God commanded, and seven great angels rose up slowly through the clouds that carpet Paradise, and there was pity on their faces, and their eyes were closed. Then God pronounced judgment, and the lights of Paradise went out, and the azure crystal windows that look towards the world, and the windows rouge and verd, became dark and colourless, and I saw no more. Presently the seven great angels came out by one of Heaven’s gates and set their faces Hellwards, and four of them carried the young soul of La Traviata, and one of them went on before and one of them followed behind. These six trod with mighty strides the long and dusty road that is named the Way of the Damned. But the seventh flew above them all the way, and the

light of the fires of Hell that was hidden from the six by the dust of that dreadful road flared on the feathers of his breast.

Presently the seven angels, as they swept Hellwards, uttered speech.

'She is very young,' they said; and 'She is very beautiful,' they said; and they looked long at the soul of La Traviata, looking not at the stains of sin, but at that portion of her soul wherewith she had loved her sister a long while dead, who flitted now about an orchard on one of Heaven's hills with a low sunlight ever on her face, who communed daily with the saints when they passed that way going to bless the dead from Heaven's utmost edge. And as they looked long at the beauty of all that remained beautiful in her soul they said: 'It is but a young soul;' and they would have taken her to one of Heaven's hills, and would there have given her a cymbal and a dulcimer, but they knew that the Paradisal gates were clamped and barred against La Traviata. And they would have taken her to a valley in the world where there were a great many flowers and a loud sound of streams, where birds were singing always and church bells rang on Sabbaths, only this they durst not do. So they swept onwards nearer and nearer Hell. But when they were come quite close and the glare was on their faces, and they saw the gates already divide and prepare to open outwards, they said: 'Hell is a terrible city, and she is tired of cities;' then suddenly they dropped her by the side of the road, and wheeled and flew away. But into a great pink flower that was horrible and lovely grew the soul of La Traviata; and it had in it two eyes but no eyelids, and it stared constantly into the faces of all the passers-by that went along the dusty road to Hell; and the flower grew in the glare of the lights of Hell, and withered but could not die; only, one petal turned back towards the heavenly hills as an ivy leaf turns outwards to the day, and in the soft and silvery light of Paradise it withered not nor faded, but heard at times the commune of the saints coming murmuring from the distance, and sometimes caught the scent of orchards wafted from the heavenly hills, and felt a faint breeze cool it every evening at the hour when the saints to Heaven's edge went forth to bless the dead.

But the Lord arose with His sword, and scattered His disobedient angels as a thresher scatters chaff.

ON THE DRY LAND

Over the marshes hung the gorgeous night with all his wandering bands of nomad stars, and his whole host of still ones blinked and watched.

Over the safe dry land to eastward, grey and cold, the first clear pallor of dawn was coming up above the heads of the immortal gods.

Then, as they neared at last the safety of the dry land, Love looked at the man whom he had led for so long through the marshes, and saw that his hair was white, for it was shining in the pallor of the dawn.

Then they stepped together on to the land, and the old man sat down weary on the grass, for they had wandered in the marshes for many years; and the light of the grey dawn widened above the heads of the gods.

And Love said to the old man, ‘I will leave you now.’

And the old man made no answer, but wept softly.

Then Love was grieved in his little careless heart, and he said: ‘You must not be sorry that I go, nor yet regret me, nor care for me at all.

‘I am a very foolish child, and was never kind to you, nor friendly. I never cared for your great thoughts, or for what was good in you, but perplexed you by leading you up and down the perilous marshes. And I was so heartless that, had you perished where I led you, it would have been nought to me, and I only stayed with you because you were good to play with.

‘And I am cruel and altogether worthless and not such a one as any should be sorry for when I go, or one to be regretted, or even cared for at all.’

And still the old man spoke not, but wept softly; and Love grieved bitterly in his kindly heart.

And Love said: ‘Because I am so small my strength has been concealed from you, and the evil that I have done. But my strength is great, and I have used it unjustly. Often I pushed you from the causeway through the marshes, and cared not if you drowned. Often I mocked you, and caused others to mock you. And often I led you among those that hated me, and laughed when they revenged themselves upon you.

‘So weep not, for there is no kindness in my heart, but only murder and foolishness, and I am no companion for one so wise as you, but am so frivolous and silly that I laughed at your noble dreams and hindered all your

deeds. See now, you have found me out, and now you will send me away, and here you will live at ease, and, undisturbed, have noble dreams of the immortal gods.

‘See now, here is dawn and safety, and *there* is darkness and peril.’

Still the old man wept softly.

Then Love said: ’Is it thus with you?’ and his voice was grave now and quiet. ‘Are you so troubled? Old friend of so many years, there is grief in my heart for you. Old friend of perilous ventures, I must leave you now. But I will send my brother soon to you — my little brother Death. And he will come up out of the marshes to you, and will not forsake you, but will be true to you as I have not been true.’

And dawn grew brighter over the immortal gods, and the old man smiled through his tears, which glistened wondrously in the increasing light. But Love went down to the night and to the marshes, looking backward over his shoulder as he went, and smiling beautifully about his eyes. And in the marshes whereunto he went, in the midst of the gorgeous night, and under the wandering bands of nomad stars, rose shouts of laughter and the sounds of the dance.

And after a while, with his face towards the morning, Death out of the marshes came up tall and beautiful, and with a faint smile shadowy on his lips, and lifted in his arms the lonely man, being gentle with him, and, murmuring with his low deep voice an ancient song, carried him to the morning to the gods.

A DREAMER’S TALES



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PREFACE

I hope for this book that it may come into the hands of those that were kind to my others and that it may not disappoint them.

— Lord Dunsany

POLTARNEES, BEHOLDER OF OCEAN

Toldees, Mondath, Arizim, these are the Inner Lands, the lands whose sentinels upon their borders do not behold the sea. Beyond them to the east there lies a desert, for ever untroubled by man: all yellow it is, and spotted with shadows of stones, and Death is in it, like a leopard lying in the sun. To the south they are bounded by magic, to the west by a mountain, and to the north by the voice and anger of the Polar wind. Like a great wall is the mountain to the west. It comes up out of the distance and goes down into the distance again, and it is named Poltarnees, Beholder of Ocean. To the northward red rocks, smooth and bare of soil, and without any speck of moss or herbage, slope up to the very lips of the Polar wind, and there is nothing else there by the noise of his anger. Very peaceful are the Inner Lands, and very fair are their cities, and there is no war among them, but quiet and ease. And they have no enemy but age, for thirst and fever lie sunning themselves out in the mid-desert, and never prowl into the Inner Lands. And the ghouls and ghosts, whose highway is the night, are kept in the south by the boundary of magic. And very small are all their pleasant cities, and all men are known to one another therein, and bless one another by name as they meet in the streets. And they have a broad, green way in every city that comes in out of some vale or wood or downland, and wanders in and out about the city between the houses and across the streets, and the people walk along it never at all, but every year at her appointed time Spring walks along it from the flowery lands, causing the anemone to bloom on the green way and all the early joys of hidden woods, or deep, secluded vales, or triumphant downlands, whose heads lift up so proudly, far up aloof from cities.

Sometimes waggoners or shepherds walk along this way, they that have come into the city from over cloudy ridges, and the townsmen hinder them not, for there is a tread that troubleth the grass and a tread that troubleth it not, and each man in his own heart knoweth which tread he hath. And in the sunlit spaces of the weald and in the wold's dark places, afar from the music of cities and from the dance of the cities afar, they make there the music of the country places and dance the country dance. Amiable, near and friendly appears to these men the sun, and as he is genial to them and tends their younger vines, so they are kind to the little woodland things and any rumour

of the fairies or old legend. And when the light of some little distant city makes a slight flush upon the edge of the sky, and the happy golden windows of the homesteads stare gleaming into the dark, then the old and holy figure of Romance, cloaked even to the face, comes down out of hilly woodlands and bids dark shadows to rise and dance, and sends the forest creatures forth to prowl, and lights in a moment in her bower of grass the little glowworm's lamp, and brings a hush down over the grey lands, and out of it rises faintly on far-off hills the voice of a lute. There are not in the world lands more prosperous and happy than Toldees, Mondath, Arizim.

From these three little kingdoms that are named the Inner Lands the young men stole constantly away. One by one they went, and no one knew why they went save that they had a longing to behold the Sea. Of this longing they spoke little, but a young man would become silent for a few days, and then, one morning very early, he would slip away and slowly climb Poltarnee's difficult slope, and having attained the top pass over and never return. A few stayed behind in the Inner Lands and became the old men, but none that had ever climbed Poltarnees from the very earliest times had ever come back again. Many had gone up Poltarnees sworn to return. Once a king sent all his courtiers, one by one, to report the mystery to him, and then went himself; none ever returned.

Now, it was the wont of the folk of the Inner Lands to worship rumours and legends of the Sea, and all that their prophets discovered of the Sea was writ in a sacred book, and with deep devotion on days of festival or mourning read in the temples by the priests. Now, all their temples lay open to the west, resting upon pillars, that the breeze from the Sea might enter them, and they lay open on pillars to the east that the breezes of the Sea might not be hindered by pass onward wherever the Sea list. And this is the legend that they had of the Sea, whom none in the Inner Lands had ever beholden. They say that the Sea is a river heading towards Hercules, and they say that he touches against the edge of the world, and that Poltarnees looks upon him. They say that all the worlds of heaven go bobbing on this river and are swept down with the stream, and that Infinity is thick and furry with forests through which the river in his course sweeps on with all the worlds of heaven. Among the colossal trunks of those dark trees, the smallest fronds of whose branches are man nights, there walk the gods. And whenever its thirst, glowing in space like a great sun, comes upon the beast, the tiger of the gods creeps down to the river to drink. And the tiger of the

gods drinks his fill loudly, whelming worlds the while, and the level of the river sinks between its banks ere the beast's thirst is quenched and ceases to glow like a sun. And many worlds thereby are heaped up dry and stranded, and the gods walk not among them evermore, because they are hard to their feet. These are the worlds that have no destiny, whose people know no god. And the river sweeps onwards ever. And the name of the River is Oriathon, but men call it Ocean. This is the Lower Faith of the Inner Lands. And there is a Higher Faith which is not told to all. Oriathon sweeps on through the forests of Infinity and all at once falls roaring over an Edge, whence Time has long ago recalled his hours to fight in his war with the gods; and falls unlit by the flash of nights and days, with his flood unmeasured by miles, into the deeps of nothing.

Now as the centuries went by and the one way by which a man could climb Poltarnees became worn with feet, more and more men surmounted it, not to return. And still they knew not in the Inner Lands upon what mystery Poltarnees looked. For on a still day and windless, while men walked happily about their beautiful streets or tended flocks in the country, suddenly the west wind would bestir himself and come in from the Sea. And he would come cloaked and grey and mournful and carry to someone the hungry cry of the Sea calling out for bones of men. And he that heard it would move restlessly for some hours, and at last would rise suddenly, irresistibly up, setting his face to Poltarnees, and would say, as is the custom of those lands when men part briefly, "Till a man's heart remembereth," which means "Farewell for a while"; but those that loved him, seeing his eyes on Poltarnees, would answer sadly, "Till the gods forget," which means "Farewell."

Now the king of Arizim had a daughter who played with the wild wood flowers, and with the fountains in her father's court, and with the little blue heaven-birds that came to her doorway in the winter to shelter from the snow. And she was more beautiful than the wild wood flowers, or than all the fountains in her father's court, or than the blue heaven-birds in their full winter plumage when they shelter from the snow. The old wise kings of Mondath and of Toldees saw her once as she went lightly down the little paths of her garden, and turning their gaze into the mists of thought, pondered the destiny of their Inner Lands. And they watched her closely by the stately flowers, and standing alone in the sunlight, and passing and repassing the strutting purple birds that the king's fowlers had brought from

Asagéhon. When she was of the age of fifteen years the King of Mondath called a council of kings. And there met with him the kings of Toldees and Arizim. And the King of Mondath in his Council said:

"The call of the unappeased and hungry Sea (and at the word 'Sea' the three kings bowed their heads) lures every year out of our happy kingdoms more and more of our men, and still we know not the mystery of the Sea, and no devised oath has brought one man back. Now thy daughter, Arizim, is lovelier than the sunlight, and lovelier than those stately flowers of thine that stand so tall in her garden, and hath more grace and beauty than those strange birds that the venturous fowlers bring in creaking wagons out of Asagéhon, whose feathers are alternate purple and white. Now, he that shall love thy daughter, Hilnaric, whoever he shall be, is the man to climb Poltarnees and return, as none hath ever before, and tell us upon what Poltarnees looks; for it may be that they daughter is more beautiful than the Sea."

Then from his Seat of Council arose the King of Arizim. He said: "I fear that thou hast spoken blasphemy against the Sea, and I have a dread that ill will come of it. Indeed I had not thought she was so fair. It is such a short while ago that she was quite a small child with her hair still unkempt and not yet attired in the manner of princesses, and she would go up into the wild woods unattended and come back with her robes unseemly and all torn, and would not take reproof with a humble spirit, but made grimaces even in my marble court all set about with fountains."

Then said the King of Toldees:

"Let us watch more closely and let us see the Princess Hilnaric in the season of the orchard-bloom when the great birds go by that know the Sea, to rest in our inland places; and if she be more beautiful than the sunrise over our folded kingdoms when all the orchards bloom, it may be that she is more beautiful than the Sea."

And the King of Arizim said:

"I fear this is terrible blasphemy, yet will I do as you have decided in council."

And the season of the orchard-bloom appeared. One night the King of Arizim called his daughter forth on his outer balcony of marble. And the moon was rising huge and round and holy over dark woods, and all the fountains were singing to the night. And the moon touched the marble palace gables, and they glowed in the land. And the moon touched the heads

of all the fountains, and the grey columns broke into fairy lights. And the moon left the dark ways of the forest and lit the whole white palace and its fountains and shone on the forehead of the Princess, and the palace of Arizim glowed afar, and the fountains became columns of gleaming jewels and song. And the moon made a music at its rising, but it fell a little short of mortal ears. And Hilnaric stood there wondering, clad in white, with the moonlight shining on her forehead; and watching her from the shadows on the terrace stood the kings of Mondath and Toldees. They said.

"She is more beautiful than the moonrise." And the season of the orchard-bloom appeared. One night the King of Arizim called his daughter forth on his outer balcony of marble. And the moon was rising huge and round and holy over dark woods, and all the fountains were singing to the night. And the moon touched the marble palace gables, and they glowed in the land. And the moon touched the heads of all the fountains, and the grey columns broke into fairy lights. And the moon left the dark ways of the forest and lit the whole white palace and its fountains and shone on the forehead of the Princess, and the palace of Arizim glowed afar, and the fountains became columns of gleaming jewels and song. And the moon made a music at its rising, but it fell a little short of mortal ears. And Hilnaric stood there wondering, clad in white, with the moonlight shining on her forehead; and watching her from the shadows on the terrace stood the kings of Mondath and Toldees. They said:

"She is more beautiful than the moonrise." And on another day the King of Arizim bade his daughter forth at dawn, and they stood again upon the balcony. And the sun came up over a world of orchards, and the sea-mists went back over Poltarnees to the Sea; little wild voices arose in all the thickets, the voices of the fountains began to die, and the song arose, in all the marble temples, of the birds that are sacred to the Sea. And Hilnaric stood there, still glowing with dreams of heaven.

"She is more beautiful," said the kings, "than morning."

Yet one more trial they made of Hilnaric's beauty, for they watched her on the terraces at sunset ere yet the petals of the orchards had fallen, and all along the edge of neighbouring woods the rhododendron was blooming with the azalea. And the sun went down under craggy Poltarnees, and the sea-mist poured over his summit inland. And the marble temples stood up clear in the evening, but films of twilight were drawn between the mountain and the city. Then from the Temple ledges and eaves of palaces the bats fell

headlong downwards, then spread their wings and floated up and down through darkening ways; lights came blinking out in golden windows, men cloaked themselves against the grey sea-mist, the sound of small songs arose, and the face of Hilnaric became a resting-place for mysteries and dreams.

"Than all these things," said the kings, "she is more lovely: but who can say whether she is lovelier than the Sea?"

Prone in a rhododendron thicket at the edge of the palace lawns a hunter had waited since the sun went down. Near to him was a deep pool where the hyacinths grew and strange flowers floated upon it with broad leaves; and there the great bull gariachs came down to drink by starlight; and, waiting there for the gariachs to come, he saw the white form of the Princess leaning on her balcony. Before the stars shone out or the bulls came down to drink he left his lurking-place and moved closer to the palace to see more nearly the Princess. The palace lawns were full of untrodden dew, and everything was still when he came across them, holding his great spear. In the farthest corner of the terraces the three old kings were discussing the beauty of Hilnaric and the destiny of the Inner Lands. Moving lightly, with a hunter's tread, the watcher by the pool came very near, even in the still evening, before the Princess saw him. When he saw her closely he exclaimed suddenly:

"She must be more beautiful than the Sea."

When the Princess turned and saw his garb and his great spear she knew that he was a hunter of gariachs.

When the three kings heard the young man exclaim they said softly to one another:

"This must be the man."

Then they revealed themselves to him, and spoke to him to try him. They said:

"Sir, you have spoken blasphemy against the Sea."

And the young man muttered:

"She is more beautiful than the Sea."

And the kings said:

"We are older than you and wiser, and know that nothing is more beautiful than the Sea."

And the young man took off the gear of his head, and became downcast, and he knew that he spake with kings, yet he answered:

“By this spear, she is more beautiful than the Sea.”

And all the while the Princess stared at him, knowing him to be a hunter of gariachs.

Then the king of Arizim said to the watcher by the pool:

“If thou wilt go up Poltarnees and come back, as none have come, and report to us what lure or magic is in the Sea, we will pardon thy blasphemy, and thou shalt have the Princess to wife and sit among the Council of Kings.”

And gladly thereunto the young man consented. And the Princess spoke to him, and asked him his name. And he told her that his name was Athelvok, and great joy arose in him at the sound of her voice. And to the three kings he promised to set out on the third day to scale the slope of Poltarnees and to return again, and this was the oath by which they bound him to return:

“I swear by the Sea that bears the worlds away, by the river of Oriathon, which men call Ocean, and by the gods and their tiger, and by the doom of the worlds, that I will return again to the Inner Lands, having beheld the Sea.”

And that oath he swore with solemnity that very night in one of the temples of the Sea, but the three kings trusted more to the beauty of Hilnaric even than to the power of the oath.

The next day Athelvok came to the palace of Arizim with the morning, over the fields to the East and out of the country of Toldees, and Hilnaric came out along her balcony and met him on the terraces. And she asked him if he had ever slain a gariach, and he said that he had slain three, and then he told her how he had killed his first down by the pool in the wood. For he had taken his father’s spear and gone down to the edge of the pool, and had lain under the azaleas there waiting for the stars to shine, by whose first light the gariachs go to the pools to drink; and he had gone too early and had had long to wait, and the passing hours seemed longer than they were. And all the birds came in that home at night, and the bat was abroad, and the hour of the duck went by, and still no gariach came down to the pool; and Athelvok felt sure that none would come. And just as this grew to a certainty in his mind the thicket parted noiselessly and a huge bull gariach stood facing him on the edge of the water, and his great horns swept out sideways from his head, and at the ends curved upwards, and were four strides in width from tip to tip. And he had not seen Athelvok, for the great

bull was on the far side of the little pool, and Athelvok could not creep round to him for fear of meeting the wind (for the gariachs, who can see little in the dark forests, rely on hearing and smell). But he devised swiftly in his mind while the bull stood there with head erect just twenty strides from him across the water. And the bull sniffed the wind cautiously and listened, then lowered his great head down to the pool and drank. At that instant Athelvok leapt into the water and shot forward through its weedy depths among the stems of the strange flowers that floated upon broad leaves on the surface. And Athelvok kept his spear out straight before him, and the fingers of his left hand he held rigid and straight, not pointing upwards, and so did not come to the surface, but was carried onward by the strength of his spring and passed unentangled through the stems of the flowers. When Athelvok jumped into the water the bull must have thrown his head up, startled at the splash, then he would have listened and have sniffed the air, and neither hearing nor scenting any danger he must have remained rigid for some moments, for it was in that attitude that Athelvok found him as he emerged breathless at his feet. And, striking at once, Athelvok drove the spear into his throat before the head and the terrible horns came down. But Athelvok had clung to one of the great horns, and had been carried at terrible speed through the rhododendron bushes until the gariach fell, but rose at once again, and died standing up, still struggling, drowned in its own blood.

But to Hilnaric listening it was as though one of the heroes of old time had come back again in the full glory of his legendary youth.

And long time they went up and down the terraces, saying those things which were said before and since, and which lips shall yet be made to say again. And above them stood Poltarnees beholding the Sea.

And the day came when Athelvok should go. And Hilnaric said to him:

“Will you not indeed most surely come back again, having just looked over the summit of Poltarnees?”

Athelvok answered: “I will indeed come back, for thy voice is more beautiful than the hymn of the priests when they chant and praise the Sea, and though many tributary seas ran down into Oriathon and he and all the others poured their beauty into one pool below me, yet would I return swearing that thou were fairer than they.”

And Hilnaric answered:

“The wisdom of my heart tells me, or old knowledge or prophecy, or some strange lore, that I shall never hear thy voice again. And for this I give thee my forgiveness.”

But he, repeating the oath that he had sworn, set out, looking often backwards until the slope became to step and his face was set to the rock. It was in the morning that he started, and he climbed all the day with little rest, where every foot-hole was smooth with many feet. Before he reached the top the sun disappeared from him, and darker and darker grew the Inner Lands. Then he pushed on so as to see before dark whatever thing Poltarnees had to show. The dusk was deep over the Inner Lands, and the lights of cities twinkled through the sea-mist when he came to Poltarnees’s summit, and the sun before him was not yet gone from the sky.

And there below him was the old wrinkled Sea, smiling and murmuring song. And he nursed little ships with gleaming sails, and in his hands were old regretted wrecks, and mast all studded over with golden nails that he had rent in anger out of beautiful galleons. And the glory of the sun was among the surges as they brought driftwood out of isles of spice, tossing their golden heads. And the grey currents crept away to the south like companionless serpents that love something afar with a restless, deadly love. And the whole plain of water glittering with late sunlight, and the surges and the currents and the white sails of ships were all together like the face of a strange new god that has looked at a man for the first time in the eyes at the moment of his death; and Athelvok, looking on the wonderful Sea, knew why it was that the dead never return, for there is something that the dead feel and know, and the living would never understand even though the dead should come and speak to them about it. And there was the Sea smiling at him, glad with the glory of the sun. And there was a haven there for homing ships, and a sunlit city stood upon its marge, and people walked about the streets of it clad in the unimagined merchandise of far sea-bordering lands.

An easy slope of loose rock went from the top of Poltarnees to the shore of the Sea.

For a long while Athelvok stood there regretfully, knowing that there had come something into his soul that no one in the Inner Lands could understand, where the thoughts of their minds had gone no farther than the three little kingdoms. Then, looking long upon the wandering ships, and the marvelous merchandise from alien lands, and the unknown colour that

wreathed the brows of the Sea, he turned his face to the darkness and the Inner Lands.

At that moment the Sea sang a dirge at sunset for all the harm that he had done in anger and all the ruin wrought on adventurous ships; and there were tears in the voice of the tyrannous Sea, for he had loved the galleons that he had overwhelmed, and he called all men to him and all living things that he might make amends, because he had loved the bones that he had strewn afar. And Athelvok turned and set one foot upon the crumbled slope, and then another, and walked a little way to be nearer to the Sea, and then a dream came upon him and he felt that men had wronged the lovely Sea because he had been angry a little, because he had been sometimes cruel; he felt that there was trouble among the tides of the Sea because he had loved the galleons who were dead. Still he walked on and the crumbled stones rolled with him, and just as the twilight faded and a star appeared he came to the golden shore, and walked on till the surges were about his knees, and he heard the prayer-like blessings of the Sea. Long he stood thus, while the stars came out above him and shone again in the surges; more stars came wheeling in their courses up from the Sea, lights twinkled out through all the haven city, lanterns were slung from the ships, the purple night burned on; and Earth, to the eyes of the gods as they sat afar, glowed as with one flame. Then Athelvok went into the haven city; there he met many who had left the Inner Lands before him; none of them wished to return to the people who had not seen the Sea; many of them had forgotten the three little kingdoms, and it was rumoured that one man, who had once tried to return, had found the shifting, crumbled slope impossible to climb.

Hilnaric never married. But her dowry was set aside to build a temple wherein men curse the ocean.

Once every year, with solemn rite and ceremony, they curse the tides of the Sea; and the moon looks in and hates them.

BLAGDAROSS

On a waste place strewn with bricks in the outskirts of a town twilight was falling. A star or two appeared over the smoke, and distant windows lit mysterious lights. The stillness deepened and the loneliness. Then all the outcast things that are silent by day found voices.

An old cork spoke first. He said: “I grew in Andalusian woods, but never listened to the idle songs of Spain. I only grew strong in the sunlight waiting for my destiny. One day the merchants came and took us all away and carried us all along the shore of the sea, piled high on the backs of donkeys, and in a town by the sea they made me into the shape that I am now. One day they sent me northward to Provence, and there I fulfilled my destiny. For they set me as a guard over the bubbling wine, and I faithfully stood sentinel for twenty years. For the first few years in the bottle that I guarded the wine slept, dreaming of Provence; but as the years went on he grew stronger and stronger, until at last whenever a man went by the wind would put out all his might against me, saying, ‘Let me go free; let me go free!’ And every year his strength increased, and he grew more clamourous when men went by, but never availed to hurl me from my post. But when I had powerfully held him for twenty years they brought him to the banquet and took me from my post, and the wine arose rejoicing and leapt through the veins of men and exalted their souls within them till they stood up in their places and sang Provençal songs. But me they cast away — me that had been sentinel for twenty years, and was still as strong and staunch as when first I went on guard. Now I am an outcast in a cold northern city, who once have known the Andalusian skies and guarded long ago Provençal suns that swam in the heart of the rejoicing wine.”

An unstruck match that somebody had dropped spoke next. “I am a child of the sun,” he said, “and an enemy of cities; there is more in my heart than you know of. I am a brother of Etna and Stromboli; I have fires lurking in me that will one day rise up beautiful and strong. We will not go into servitude on any hearth nor work machines for our food, but we will take out own food where we find it on that day when we are strong. There are wonderful children in my heart whose faces shall be more lively than the rainbow; they shall make a compact with the North wind, and he shall lead them forth; all shall be black behind them and black above them, and there

shall be nothing beautiful in the world but them; they shall seize upon the earth and it shall be theirs, and nothing shall stop them but our old enemy the sea."

Then an old broken kettle spoke, and said: "I am the friend of cities. I sit among the slaves upon the hearth, the little flames that have been fed with coal. When the slaves dance behind the iron bars I sit in the middle of the dance and sing and make our masters glad. And I make songs about the comfort of the cat, and about the malice that is towards her in the heart of the dog, and about the crawling of the baby, and about the ease that is in the lord of the house when we brew the good brown tea; and sometimes when the house is very warm and slaves and masters are glad, I rebuke the hostile winds that prowl about the world."

And then there spoke the piece of an old cord. "I was made in a place of doom, and doomed men made my fibres, working without hope. Therefore there came a grimness into my heart, so that I never let anything go free when once I was set to bind it. Many a thing have I bound relentlessly for months and years; for I used to come coiling into warehouses where the great boxes lay all open to the air, and one of them would be suddenly closed up, and my fearful strength would be set on him like accurse, and if his timbers groaned when first I seized them, or if they creaked aloud in the lonely night, thinking of woodlands out of which they came, then I only gripped them tighter still, for the poor useless hate is in my soul of those that made me in the place of doom. Yet, for all the things that my prison-clutch has held, the last work that I did was to set something free. I lay idle one night in the gloom on the warehouse floor. Nothing stirred there, and even the spider slept. Towards midnight a great flock of echoes suddenly leapt up from the wooden planks and circled round the roof. A man was coming towards me all alone. And as he came his soul was reproaching him, and I saw that there was a great trouble between the man and his soul, for his soul would not let him be, but went on reproaching him.

"Then the man saw me and said, 'This at least will not fail me.' When I heard him say this about me, I determined that whatever he might require of me it should be done to the uttermost. And as I made this determination in my unfaltering heart, he picked me up and stood on an empty box that I should have bound on the morrow, and tied one end of me to a dark rafter; and the knot was carelessly tied, because his soul was reproaching him all the while continually and giving him no ease. Then he made the other end

of me into a noose, but when the man's soul saw this it stopped reproaching the man, and cried out to him hurriedly, and besought him to be at peace with it and to do nothing sudden; but the man went on with his work, and put the noose down over his face and underneath his chin, and the soul screamed horribly.

"Then the man kicked the box away with his foot, and the moment he did this I knew that my strength was not great enough to hold him; but I remembered that he had said I would not fail him, and I put all my grim vigour into my fibres and held by sheer will. Then the soul shouted to me to give way, but I said:

"'No; you vexed the man.'

"Then it screamed for me to leave go of the rafter, and already I was slipping, for I only held on to it by a careless knot, but I gripped with my prison grip and said:

"'You vexed the man.'

"And very swiftly it said other things to me, but I answered not; and at last the soul that vexed the man that had trusted me flew away and left him at peace. I was never able to bind things any more, for every one of my fibres was worn and wrenched, and even my relentless heart was weakened by the struggle. Very soon afterwards I was thrown out here. I have done my work."

So they spoke among themselves, but all the while there loomed above them the form of an old rocking-horse complaining bitterly. He said: "I am Blagdaross. Woe is me that I should lie now an outcast among these worthy but little people. Alas! for the days that are gathered, and alas for the Great One that was a master and a soul to me, whose spirit is now shrunken and can never know me again, and no more ride abroad on knightly quests. I was Bucephalus when he was Alexander, and carried him victorious as far as Ind. I encountered dragons with him when he was St. George, I was the horse of Roland fighting for Christendom, and was often Rosinante. I fought in tournays and went errant upon quests, and met Ulysses and the heroes and the fairies. Or late in the evening, just before the lamps in the nursery were put out, he would suddenly mount me, and we would gallop through Africa. There we would pass by night through tropic forests, and come upon dark rivers sweeping by, all gleaming with the eyes of crocodiles, where the hippopotamus floated down with the stream, and mysterious craft loomed suddenly out of the dark and furtively passed away.

And when we had passed through the forest lit by the fireflies we would come to the open plains, and gallop onwards with scarlet flamingoes flying along beside us through the lands of dusky kings, with golden crowns upon their heads and scepters in their hands, who came running out of their palaces to see us pass. Then I would wheel suddenly, and the dust flew up from my four hooves as I turned and we galloped home again, and my master was put to bed. And again he would ride abroad on another day till we came to magical fortresses guarded by wizardry and overthrew the dragons at the gate, and ever came back with a princess fairer than the sea.

"But my master began to grow larger in his body and smaller in his soul, and then he rode more seldom upon quests. At last he saw gold and never came again, and I was cast out here among these little people."

But while the rocking-horse was speaking two boys stole away, unnoticed by their parents, from a house on the edge of the waste place, and were coming across it looking for adventures. One of them carried a broom, and when he saw the rocking-horse he said nothing, but broke off the handle from the broom and thrust it between his braces and his shirt on the left side. Then he mounted the rocking-horse, and drawing forth the broomstick, which was sharp and spiky at the end, said, "Saladin is in this desert with all his paynims, and I am Coeur de Lion." After a while the other boy said: "Now let me kill Saladin too." But Blagdaross in his wooden heart, that exulted with thoughts of battle, said: "I am Blagdaross yet!"

THE MADNESS OF ANDELSPRUTZ

I first saw the city of Andelsprutz on an afternoon in spring. The day was full of sunshine as I came by the way of the fields, and all that morning I had said, “There will be sunlight on it when I see for the first time the beautiful conquered city whose fame has so often made for me lovely dreams.” Suddenly I saw its fortifications lifting out of the fields, and behind them stood its belfries. I went in by a gate and saw its houses and streets, and a great disappointment came upon me. For there is an air about a city, and it has a way with it, whereby a man may recognized one from another at once. There are cities full of happiness and cities full of pleasure, and cities full of gloom. There are cities with their faces to heaven, and some with their faces to earth; some have a way of looking at the past and others look at the future; some notice you if you come among them, others glance at you, others let you go by. Some love the cities that are their neighbours, others are dear to the plains and to the heath; some cities are bare to the wind, others have purple cloaks and others brown cloaks, and some are clad in white. Some tell the old tale of their infancy, with others it is secret; some cities sing and some mutter, some are angry, and some have broken hearts, and each city has her way of greeting Time.

I had said: “I will see Andelsprutz arrogant with her beauty,” and I had said: “I will see her weeping over her conquest.”

I had said: “She will sing songs to me,” and “she will be reticent,” “she will be all robed,” and “she will be bare but splendid.”

But the windows of Andelsprutz in her houses looked vacantly over the plains like the eyes of a dead madman. At the hour her chimes sounded unlovely and discordant, some of them were out of tune, and the bells of some were cracked, her roofs were bald and without moss. At evening no pleasant rumour arose in her streets. When the lamps were lit in the houses no mystical flood of light stole out into the dusk, you merely saw that there were lighted lamps; Andelsprutz had no way with her and no air about her. When the night fell and the blinds were all drawn down, then I perceived what I had not thought in the daylight. I knew then that Andelsprutz was dead.

I saw a fair-haired man who drank beer in a café, and I said to him:

“Why is the city of Andelsprutz quite dead, and her soul gone hence?”

He answered: “Cities do not have souls and there is never any life in bricks.”

And I said to him: “Sir, you have spoken truly.”

And I asked the same question of another man, and he gave me the same answer, and I thanked him for his courtesy. And I saw a man of a more slender build, who had black hair, and channels in his cheeks for tears to run in, and I said to him:

“Why is Andelsprutz quite dead, and when did her soul go hence?”

And he answered: “Andelsprutz hoped too much. For thirty years would she stretch out her arms toward the land of Akla every night, to Mother Akla from whom she had been stolen. Every night she would be hoping and sighing, and stretching out her arms to Mother Akla. At midnight, once a year, on the anniversary of the terrible day, Akla would send spies to lay a wreath against the walls of Andelsprutz. She could do no more. And on this night, once in every year, I used to weep, for weeping was the mood of the city that nursed me. Every night while other cities slept did Andelsprutz sit brooding here and hoping, till thirty wreaths lay mouldering by her walls, and still the armies of Akla could not come.

“But after she had hoped so long, and on the night that faithful spies had brought her thirtieth wreath, Andelsprutz went suddenly mad. All the bells clanged hideously in the belfries, horses bolted in the streets, the dogs all howled, the stolid conquerors awoke and turned in their beds and slept again; and I saw the grey shadowy form of Andelsprutz rise up, decking her hair with the phantasms of cathedrals, and stride away from her city. And the great shadowy form that was the soul of Andelsprutz went away muttering to the mountains, and there I followed her — for had she not been my nurse? Yes, I went away alone into the mountains, and for three days, wrapped in a cloak, I slept in their misty solitudes. I had no food to eat, and to drink I had only the water of the mountain streams. By day no living thing was near to me, and I heard nothing but the noise of the wind, and the mountain streams roaring. But for three nights I heard all round me on the mountain the sounds of a great city: I saw the lights of tall cathedral windows flash momentarily on the peaks, and at times the glimmering lantern of some fortress patrol. And I saw the huge misty outline of the soul of Andelsprutz sitting decked with her ghostly cathedrals, speaking to herself, with her eyes fixed before her in a mad stare, telling of ancient wars. And her confused speech for all those nights upon the mountain was

sometimes the voice of traffic, and then of church bells, and then of bugles, but oftenest it was the voice of red war; and it was all incoherent, and she was quite mad.

"The third night it rained heavily all night long, but I stayed up there to watch the soul of my native city. And she still sat staring straight before her, raving; but here voice was gentler now, there were more chimes in it, and occasional song. Midnight passed, and the rain still swept down on me, and still the solitudes of the mountain were full of the mutterings of the poor mad city. And the hours after midnight came, the cold hours wherein sick men die.

"Suddenly I was aware of great shapes moving in the rain, and heard the sound of voices that were not of my city nor yet of any that I ever knew. And presently I discerned, though faintly, the souls of a great concourse of cities, all bending over Andelsprutz and comforting her, and the ravines of the mountains roared that night with the voices of cities that had lain still for centuries. For there came the soul of Camelot that had so long ago forsaken Usk; and there was Ilion, all girt with towers, still cursing the sweet face of ruinous Helen; I saw there Babylon and Persepolis, and the bearded face of bull-like Nineveh, and Athens mourning her immortal gods.

"All these souls if cities that were dead spoke that night on the mountain to my city and soothed her, until at last she muttered of war no longer, and her eyes stared wildly no more, but she hid her face in her hands and for some while wept softly. At last she arose, and walking slowly and with bended head, and leaning upon Ilion and Carthage, went mournfully eastwards; and the dust of her highways swirled behind her as she went, a ghostly dust that never turned to mud in all that drenching rain. And so the souls of the cities led her away, and gradually they disappeared from the mountain, and the ancient voices died away in the distance.

"Now since then have I seen my city alive; but once I met with a traveler who said that somewhere in the midst of a great desert are gathered together the souls of all dead cities. He said that he was lost once in a place where there was no water, and he heard their voices speaking all the night."

But I said: "I was once without water in a desert and heard a city speaking to me, but knew not whether it really spoke to me or not, for on that day I heard so many terrible things, and only some of them were true."

And the man with the black hair said: "I believe it to be true, though whither she went I know not. I only know that a shepherd found me in the

morning faint with hunger and cold, and carried me down here; and when I came to Andelsprutz it was, as you have perceived it, dead."

WHERE THE TIDES EBB AND FLOW

I dreamt that I had done a horrible thing, so that burial was to be denied me either in soil or sea, neither could there be any hell for me.

I waited for some hours, knowing this. Then my friends came for me, and slew me secretly and with ancient rite, and lit great tapers, and carried me away.

It was all in London that the thing was done, and they went furtively at dead of night along grey streets and among mean houses until they came to the river. And the river and the tide of the sea were grappling with one another between the mud-banks, and both of them were black and full of lights. A sudden wonder came in to the eyes of each, as my friends came near to them with their glaring tapers. All these things I saw as they carried me dead and stiffening, for my soul was still among my bones, because there was no hell for it, and because Christian burial was denied me.

They took me down a stairway that was green with slimy things, and so came slowly to the terrible mud. There, in the territory of forsaken things, they dug a shallow grave. When they had finished they laid me in the grave, and suddenly they cast their tapers to the river. And when the water had quenched the flaring lights the tapers looked pale and small as they bobbed upon the tide, and at once the glamour of the calamity was gone, and I noticed then the approach of the huge dawn; and my friends cast their cloaks over their faces, and the solemn procession was turned into many fugitives that furtively stole away.

Then the mud came back wearily and covered all but my face. There I lay alone with quite forgotten things, with drifting things that the tides will take no farther, with useless things and lost things, and with the horrible unnatural bricks that are neither stone nor soil. I was rid of feeling, because I had been killed, but perception and thought were in my unhappy soul. The dawn widened, and I saw the desolate houses that crowded the marge of the river, and their dead windows peered into my dead eyes, windows with bales behind them instead of human souls. I grew so weary looking at these forlorn things that I wanted to cry out, but could not, because I was dead. Then I knew, as I had never known before, that for all the years that herd of desolate houses had wanted to cry out too, but, being dead, were dumb. And I knew then that it had yet been well with the forgotten drifting things if

they had wept, but they were eyeless and without life. And I, too, tried to weep, but there were no tears in my dead eyes. And I knew then that the river might have cared for us, might have caressed us, might have sung to us, but he swept broadly onwards, thinking of nothing but the princely ships.

At last the tide did what the river would not, and came and covered me over, and my soul had rest in the green water, and rejoiced and believed that it had the Burial of the Sea. But with the ebb the water fell again, and left me alone again with the callous mud among the forgotten things that drift no more, and with the sight of all those desolate houses, and with the knowledge among all of us that each was dead.

In the mournful wall behind me, hung with green weeds, forsaken of the sea, dark tunnels appeared, and secret narrow passages that were clamped and barred. From these at last the stealthy rats came down to nibble me away, and my soul rejoiced thereat and believed that he would be free perforce from the accursed bones to which burial was refused. Very soon the rats ran away a little space and whispered among themselves. They never came any more. When I found that I was accursed even among the rats I tried to weep again.

Then the tide came swinging back and covered the dreadful mud, and hid the desolate houses, and soothed the forgotten things, and my soul had ease for a while in the sepulture of the sea. And then the tide forsook me again.

To and fro it came about me for many years. Then the County Council found me, and gave me decent burial. It was the first grave that I had ever slept in. That very night my friends came for me. They dug me up and put me back again in the shallow hold in the mud.

Again and again through the years my bones found burial, but always behind the funeral lurked one of those terrible men who, as soon as night fell, came and dug them up and carried them back again to the hole in the mud.

And then one day the last of those men died who once had done to me this terrible thing. I heard his soul go over the river at sunset.

And again I hoped.

A few weeks afterwards I was found once more, and once more taken out of that restless place and given deep burial in sacred ground, where my soul hoped that it should rest.

Almost at once men came with cloaks and tapers to give me back to the mud, for the thing had become a tradition and a rite. And all the forsaken things mocked me in their dumb hearts when they saw me carried back, for they were jealous of me because I had left the mud. It must be remembered that I could not weep.

And the years went by seawards where the black barges go, and the great derelict centuries became lost at sea, and still I lay there without any cause to hope, and daring not to hope without a cause, because of the terrible envy and the anger of the things that could drift no more.

Once a great storm rode up, even as far as London, out of the sea from the South; and he came curving into the river with the fierce East wind. And he was mightier than the dreary tides, and went with great leaps over the listless mud. And all the sad forgotten things rejoiced, and mingled with things that were haughtier than they, and rode once more amongst the lordly shipping that was driven up and down. And out of their hideous home he took my bones, never again, I hoped, to be vexed with the ebb and flow. And with the fall of the tide he went riding down the river and turned to the southwards, and so went to his home. And my bones he scattered among many isles and along the shores of happy alien mainlands. And for a moment, while they were far asunder, my soul was almost free.

Then there arose, at the will of the moon, the assiduous flow of the tide, and it undid at once the work of the ebb, and gathered my bones from the marge of sunny isles, and gleaned them all along the mainland's shores, and went rocking northwards till it came to the mouth of the Thames, and there turned westwards its relentless face, and so went up the river and came to the hole in the mud, and into it dropped my bones; and partly the mud covered them, and partly it left them white, for the mud cares not for its forsaken things.

Then the ebb came, and I saw the dead eyes of the houses and the jealousy of the other forgotten things that the storm had not carried thence.

And some more centuries passed over the ebb and flow and over the loneliness of things for gotten. And I lay there all the while in the careless grip of the mud, never wholly covered, yet never able to go free, and I longed for the great caress of the warm Earth or the comfortable lap of the Sea.

Sometimes men found my bones and buried them, but the tradition never died, and my friends' successors always brought them back. At last the

barges went no more, and there were fewer lights; shaped timbers no longer floated down the fairway, and there came instead old wind-uprooted trees in all their natural simplicity.

At last I was aware that somewhere near me a blade of grass was growing, and the moss began to appear all over the dead houses. One day some thistledown went drifting over the river.

For some years I watched these signs attentively, until I became certain that London was passing away. Then I hoped once more, and all along both banks of the river there was anger among the lost things that anything should dare to hope upon the forsaken mud. Gradually the horrible houses crumbled, until the poor dead things that never had had life got decent burial among the weeds and moss. At last the may appeared and the convolvulus. Finally, the wild rose stood up over mounds that had been wharves and warehouses. Then I knew that the cause of Nature had triumphed, and London had passed away.

The last man in London came to the wall by the river, in an ancient cloak that was one of those that once my friends had worn, and peered over the edge to see that I still was there. Then he went, and I never saw men again: they had passed away with London.

A few days after the last man had gone the birds came into London, all the birds that sing. When they first saws me they all looked sideways at me, then they went away a little and spoke among themselves.

“He only sinned against Man,” they said; “it is not our quarrel.”

“Let us be kind to him,” they said.

Then they hopped nearer me and began to sing. It was the time of the rising of the dawn, and from both banks of the river, and from the sky, and from the thickets that were once the streets, hundreds of birds were singing. As the light increased the birds sang more and more; they grew thicker and thicker in the air above my head, till there were thousands of them singing there, and then millions, and at last I could see nothing but a host of flickering wings with the sunlight on them, and little gaps of sky. Then when there was nothing to be heard in London but the myriad notes of that exultant song, my soul rose up from the bones in the hole in the mud and began to climb heavenwards. And it seemed that a lane-way opened amongst the wings of the birds, and it went up and up, and one of the smaller gates of Paradise stood ajar at the end of it. And then I knew by a

sign that the mud should receive me no more, for suddenly I found that I could weep.

At this moment I opened my eyes in bed in a house in London, and outside some sparrows were twittering in a tree in the light of the radiant morning; and there were tears still wet upon my face, for one's restraint is feeble while one sleeps. But I arose and opened the window wide, and stretching my hands out over the little garden, I blessed the birds whose song had woken me up from the troubled and terrible centuries of my dream.

BETHMOORA

There is a faint freshness in the London night as though some strayed reveler of a breeze had left his comrades in the Kentish uplands and had entered the town by stealth. The pavements are a little damp and shiny. Upon one's ears that at this late hour have become very acute there hits the tap of a remote footfall. Louder and louder grow the taps, filling the whole night. And a black cloaked figure passes by, and goes tapping into the dark. One who has danced goes homewards. Somewhere a ball has closed its doors and ended. Its yellow lights are out, its musicians are silent, its dancers have all gone into the night air, and Time has said of it, "Let it be past and over, and among the things that I have put away."

Shadows begin to detach themselves from their great gathering places. No less silently than those shadows that are thin and dead move homewards the stealthy cats. Thus have we even in London our faint forebodings of the dawn's approach, which the birds and the beasts and the stars are crying aloud to the untrammeled fields.

At what moment I know not I perceive that the night itself is irrevocably overthrown. It is suddenly revealed to me by the weary pallor of the street lamps that the streets are silent and nocturnal still, not because there is any strength in night, but because men have not yet arisen from sleep to defy him. So have I seen dejected and untidy guards still bearing antique muskets in palatial gateways, although the realms of the monarch that they guard have shrunk to a single province which no enemy yet has troubled to overrun.

And it is now manifest from the aspect of the street lamps, those abashed dependants of night, that already English mountain peaks have seen the dawn, that the cliffs of Dover are standing white to the morning, that the sea-mist has lifted and is pouring inland.

And now men with a hose have come and are sluicing out the streets.

Behold now night is dead.

What memories, what fancies throng one's mind! A night but just now gathered out of London by the horrific hand of Time. A million common artificial things all cloaked for a while in mystery, like beggars robed in purple, and seated on dread thrones. Four million people asleep, dreaming perhaps. What worlds have they gone into? Whom have they met? But my

thoughts are far off with Bethmoora in her loneliness, whose gates swing to and fro. To and fro they swing, and creak and creak in the wind, but no one hears them. They are of green copper, very lovely, but no one sees them now. The desert wind pours sand into their hinges, no watchman comes to ease them. No guard goes round Bethmoora's battlements, no enemy assails them. There are no lights in her houses, no footfall on her streets, she stands there dead and lonely beyond the Hills of Hap, and I would see Bethmoora once again, but dare not.

It is many a year, they tell me, since Bethmoora became desolate.

Her desolation is spoken of in taverns where sailors meet, and certain travellers have told me of it.

I had hoped to see Bethmoora once again. It is many a year ago, they say, when the vintage was last gathered in from the vineyards that I knew, where it is all desert now. It was a radiant day, and the people of the city were dancing by the vineyards, while here and there one played upon the kalipac. The purple flowering shrubs were all in bloom, and the snow shone upon the Hills of Hap.

Outside the copper gates they crushed the grapes in vats to make the syrabub. It had been a goodly vintage.

In the little gardens at the desert's edge men beat the tambang and the tittibuk, and blew melodiously the zootibar.

All there was mirth and song and dance, because the vintage had been gathered in, and there would be ample syrabub for the winter months, and much left over to exchange for turquoises and emeralds with the merchants who come down from Oxuhahn. Thus they rejoiced all day over their vintage on the narrow strip of cultivated ground that lay between Bethmoora and the desert which meets the sky to the South. And when the heat of the day began to abate, and the sun drew near to the snows on the Hills of Hap, the note of the zootibar still rose clear from the gardens, and the brilliant dresses of the dancers still wound among the flowers. All that day three men on mules had been noticed crossing the face of the Hills of Hap. Backwards and forwards they moved as the track wound lower and lower, three little specks of black against the snow. They were seen first in the very early morning up near the shoulder of Peol Jagganoth, and seemed to be coming out of Utnar Véhi. All day they came. And in the evening, just before the lights come out and colours change, they appeared before Bethmoora's copper gates. They carried staves, such as messengers bear in

those lands, and seemed sombrely clad when the dancers all came round them with their green and lilac dresses. Those Europeans who were present and heard the message given were ignorant of the language, and only caught the name of Utnar Véhi. But it was brief, and passed rapidly from mouth to mouth, and almost at once the people burnt their vineyards and began to flee away from Bethmoora, going for the most part northwards, though some went to the East. They ran down out of their fair white houses, and streamed through the copper gate; the throbbing of the tambang and the tittibuk suddenly ceased with the note of the Zootibar, and the clinking kalipac stopped a moment after. The three strange travellers went back the way they came the instant their message was given. It was the hour when a light would have appeared in some high tower, and window after window would have poured into the dusk its lion-frightening light, and the cooper gates would have been fastened up. But no lights came out in windows there that night and have not ever since, and those copper gates were left wide and have never shut, and the sound arose of the red fire crackling in the vineyards, and the pattering of feet fleeing softly. There were no cries, no other sounds at all, only the rapid and determined flight. They fled as swiftly and quietly as a herd of wild cattle flee when they suddenly see a man. It was as though something had befallen which had been feared for generations, which could only be escaped by instant flight, which left no time for indecision.

Then fear took the Europeans also, and they too fled. And what the message was I have never heard.

Many believe that it was a message from Thuba Mleen, the mysterious emperor of those lands, who is never seen by man, advising that Bethmoora should be left desolate. Others say that the message was one of warning from the gods, whether from friendly gods or from adverse ones they know not.

And others hold that the Plague was ravaging a line of cities over in Utnar Véhi, following the South-west wind which for many weeks had been blowing across them towards Bethmoora.

Some say that the terrible gnousar sickness was upon the three travellers, and that their very mules were dripping with it, and suppose that they were driven to the city by hunger, but suggest no better reason for so terrible a crime.

But most believe that it was a message from the desert himself, who owns all the Earth to the southwards, spoken with his peculiar cry to those three who knew his voice — men who had been out on the sand-wastes without tents by night, who had been by day without water, men who had been out there where the desert mutters, and had grown to know his needs and his malevolence. They say that the desert had a need for Bethmoora, that he wished to come into her lovely streets, and to send into her temples and her houses his storm-winds draped with sand. For he hates the sound and the sight of men in his old evil heart, and he would have Bethmoora silent and undisturbed, save for the weird love he whispers to her gates.

If I knew what that message was that the three men brought on mules, and told in the copper gate, I think that I should go and see Bethmoora once again. For a great longing comes on me here in London to see once more that white and beautiful city, and yet I dare not, for I know not the danger I should have to face, whether I should risk the fury of unknown dreadful gods, or some disease unspeakable and slow, or the desert's curse or torture in some little private room of the Emperor Thuba Mleen, or something that the travelers have not told — perhaps more fearful still.

IDLE DAYS ON THE YANN

So I came down through the wood on the bank of Yann and found, as had been prophesied, the ship *Bird of the River* about to loose her cable.

The captain sat cross-legged upon the white deck with his scimitar lying beside him in its jeweled scabbard, and the sailors toiled to spread the nimble sails to bring the ship into the central stream of Yann, and all the while sang ancient soothing songs. And the wind of the evening descending cool from the snowfields of some mountainous abode of distant gods came suddenly, like glad tidings to an anxious city, into the wing-like sails.

And so we came into the central stream, whereat the sailors lowered the greater sails. But I had gone to bow before the captain, and to inquire concerning the miracles, and appearances among men, of the most holy gods of whatever land he had come from. And the captain answered that he came from fair Belzoond, and worshipped gods that were the least and humblest, who seldom sent the famine or the thunder, and were easily appeased with little battles. And I told how I came from Ireland, which is of Europe, whereat the captain and all the sailors laughed, for they said, "There are no such places in all the land of dreams." When they had ceased to mock me, I explained that my fancy mostly dwelt in the desert of Cuppar-Nombo, about a beautiful blue city called Golthoth the Damned, which was sentinelled all round by wolves and their shadows, and had been utterly desolate for years and years, because of a curse which the gods once spoke in anger and could never since recall. And sometimes my dreams took me as far as Pungar Vees, the red walled city where the fountains are, which trades with the Isles and Thul. When I said this they complimented me upon the abode of my fancy, saying that, though they had never seen these cities, such places might well be imagined. For the rest of that evening I bargained with the captain over the sum that I should pay him for any fare if God and the tide of Yann should bring us safely as far as the cliffs by the sea, which are named Bar-Wul-Yann, the Gate of Yann.

And now the sun had set, and all the colours of the world and heaven had held a festival with him, and slipped one by one away before the imminent approach of night. The parrots had all flown home to the jungle on either bank, the monkeys in rows in safety on high branches of the trees were silent and asleep, the fireflies in the deeps of the forest were going up and

down, and the great stars came gleaming out to look on the face of Yann. Then the sailors lighted lanterns and hung them round the ship, and the light flashed out on a sudden and dazzled Yann, and the ducks that fed along his marshy banks all suddenly arose, and made wide circles in the upper air, and saw the distant reaches of the Yann and the white mist that softly cloaked the jungle, before they returned again to their marshes.

And then the sailors knelt on the decks and prayed, not all together, but five or six at a time. Side by side there kneeled down together five or six, for there only prayed at the same time men of different faiths, so that no god should hear two men praying to him at once. As soon as any one had finished his prayer, another of the same faith would take his place. Thus knelt the row of five or six with bended heads under the fluttering sail, while the central stream of the River Yann took them on towards the sea, and their prayers rose up from among the lanterns and went towards the stars. And behind them in the after end of the ship the helmsman prayed aloud the helmsman's prayer, which is prayed by all who follow his trade upon the River Yann, of whatever faith they be. And the captain prayed to his little lesser gods, to the gods that bless Belzoond.

And I too felt that I would pray. Yet I liked not to pray to a jealous God there where the frail affectionate gods whom the heathen love were being humbly invoked; so I bethought me, instead, of Sheol Nugganoth, whom the men of the jungle have long since deserted, who is now unworshipped and alone; and to him I prayed.

And upon us praying the night came suddenly down, as it comes upon all men who pray at evening and upon all men who do not; yet our prayers comforted our own souls when we thought of the Great Night to come.

And so Yann bore us magnificently onwards, for he was elate with molten snow that the Poltiades had brought him from the Hills of Hap, and the Marn and Migris were swollen with floods; and he bore us in his full might past Kyph and Pir, and we saw the lights of Goolunza.

Soon we all slept except the helmsman, who kept the ship in the mid-stream of Yann.

When the sun rose the helmsman ceased to sing, for by song he cheered himself in the lonely night. When the song ceased we suddenly all awoke, and another took the helm, and the helmsman slept.

We knew that soon we should come to Mandaroon. We made a meal, and Mandaroon appeared. Then the captain commanded, and the sailors loosed

again the greater sails, and the ship turned and left the stream of Yann and came into a harbour beneath the ruddy walls of Mandaroon. Then while the sailors went and gathered fruits I came alone to the gate of Mandaroon. A few huts were outside it, in which lived the guard. A sentinel with a long white beard was standing in the gate, armed with a rusty pike. He wore large spectacles, which were covered with dust. Through the gate I saw the city. A deathly stillness was over all of it. The ways seemed untrodden, and moss was thick on doorsteps; in the market-place huddled figures lay asleep. A scent of incense came wafted through the gateway, of incense and burned poppies, and there was a hum of the echoes of distant bells. I said to the sentinel in the tongue of the region of Yann, "Why are they all asleep in this still city?"

He answered: "None may ask questions in this gate for fear they will wake the people of the city. For when the people of this city wake the gods will die. And when the gods die men may dream no more." And I began to ask him what gods that city worshipped, but he lifted his pike because none might ask questions there. So I left him and went back to the *Bird of the River*.

Certainly Mandaroon was beautiful with her white pinnacles peering over her ruddy walls and the green of her copper roofs.

When I came back again to the *Bird of the River*, I found the sailors were returned to the ship. Soon we weighed anchor, and sailed out again, and so came once more to the middle of the river. And now the sun was moving toward his heights, and there had reached us on the River Yann the song of those countless myriads of choirs that attend him in his progress round the world. For the little creatures that have many legs had spread their gauze wings easily on the air, as a man rests his elbows on a balcony and gave jubilant, ceremonial praises to the sun, or else they moved together on the air in wavering dances intricate and swift, or turned aside to avoid the onrush of some drop of water that a breeze had shaken from a jungle orchid, chilling the air and driving it before it, as it fell whirring in its rush to the earth; but all the while they sang triumphantly. "For the day is for us," they said, "whether our great and sacred father the Sun shall bring up more life like us from the marshes, or whether all the world shall end tonight." And there sang all those whose notes are known to human ears, as well as those whose far more numerous notes have been never heard by man.

To these a rainy day had been as an era of war that should desolate continents during all the lifetime of a man.

And there came out also from the dark and steaming jungle to behold and rejoice in the Sun the huge and lazy butterflies. And they danced, but danced idly, on the ways of the air, as some haughty queen of distant conquered lands might in her poverty and exile dance, in some encampment of the gipsies, for the mere bread to live by, but beyond that would never abate her pride to dance for a fragment more.

And the butterflies sung of strange and painted things, of purple orchids and of lost pink cities and the monstrous colours of the jungle's decay. And they, too, were among those whose voices are not discernible by human ears. And as they floated above the river, going from forest to forest, their splendour was matched by the inimical beauty of the birds who darted out to pursue them. Or sometimes they settled on the white and wax-like blooms of the plant that creeps and clambers about the trees of the forest; and their purple wings flashed out on the great blossoms as, when the caravans go from Nurl to Thace, the gleaming silks flash out upon the snow, where the crafty merchants spread them one by one to astonish the mountaineers of the Hills of Noor.

But upon men and beasts the sun sent drowsiness. The river monsters along the river's marge lay dormant in the slime. The sailors pitched a pavilion, with golden tassels, for the captain upon the deck, and then went, all but the helmsman, under a sail that they had hung as an awning between two masts. Then they told tales to one another, each of his own city or of the miracles of his god, until all were fallen asleep. The captain offered me the shade of his pavillion with the gold tassels, and there we talked for a while, he telling me that he was taking merchandise to Perdóndaris, and that he would take back to fair Belzoond things appertaining to the affairs of the sea. Then, as I watched through the pavilion's opening the brilliant birds and butterflies that crossed and recrossed over the river, I fell asleep, and dreamed that I was a monarch entering his capital underneath arches of flags, and all the musicians of the world were there, playing melodiously their instruments; but no one cheered.

In the afternoon, as the day grew cooler again, I awoke and found the captain buckling on his scimitar, which he had taken off him while he rested.

And now we were approaching the wide court of Astahahn, which opens upon the river. Strange boats of antique design were chained there to the steps. As we neared it we saw the open marble court, on three sides of which stood the city fronting on colonnades. And in the court and along the colonnades the people of that city walked with solemnity and care according to the rites of ancient ceremony. All in that city was of ancient device; the carving on the houses, which, when age had broken it, remained unrepaired, was of the remotest times, and everywhere were represented in stone beasts that have long since passed away from Earth — the dragon, the griffin, the hippogriffin, and the different species of gargoyle. Nothing was to be found, whether material or custom, that was new in Astahahn. Now they took no notice at all of us as we went by, but continued their processions and ceremonies in the ancient city, and the sailors, knowing their custom, took no notice of them. But I called, as we came near, to one who stood beside the water's edge, asking him what men did in Astahahn and what their merchandise was, and with whom they traded. He said, "Here we have fettered and manacled Time, who would otherwise slay the gods."

I asked him what gods they worshipped in that city, and he said, "All those gods whom Time has not yet slain." Then he turned from me and would say no more, but busied himself in behaving in accordance with ancient custom. And so, according to the will of Yann, we drifted onwards and left Astahahn. The river widened below Astahahn, and we found in greater quantities such birds as prey on fishes. And they were very wonderful in their plumage, and they came not out of the jungle, but flew, with their long necks stretched out before them, and their legs lying on the wind behind, straight up the river over the mid-stream.

And now the evening began to gather in. A thick white mist had appeared over the river, and was softly rising higher. It clutched at the trees with long impalpable arms, it rose higher and higher, chilling the air; and white shapes moved away into the jungle as though the ghosts of shipwrecked mariners were searching stealthily in the darkness for the spirits of evil that long ago had wrecked them on the Yann.

As the sun sank behind the field of orchids that grew on the matted summit of the jungle, the river monsters came wallowing out of the slime in which they had reclined during the heat of the day, and the great beasts of the jungle came down to drink. The butterflies a while since were gone to

rest. In little narrow tributaries that we passed night seemed already to have fallen, though the sun which had disappeared from us had not yet set.

And now the birds of the jungle came flying home far over us, with the sunlight glistening pink upon their breasts, and lowered their pinions as soon as they saw the Yann, and dropped into the trees. And the widgeon began to go up the river in great companies, all whistling, and then would suddenly wheel and all go down again. And there shot by us the small and arrow-like teal; and we heard the manifold cries of flocks of geese, which the sailors told me had recently come in from crossing over the Lispasian ranges; every year they come by the same way, close by the peak of Mluna, leaving it to the left, and the mountain eagles know the way they come and — men say — the very hour, and every year they expect them by the same way as soon as the snows have fallen upon the Northern Plains. But soon it grew so dark that we heard those birds no more, and only heard the whirring of their wings, and of countless others besides, until they all settled down along the banks of the river, and it was the hour when the birds of the night went forth. Then the sailors lit the lanterns for the night, and huge moths appeared, flapping about the ship, and at moments their gorgeous colours would be revealed by the lanterns, then they would pass into the night again, where all was black. And again the sailors prayed, and thereafter we supped and slept, and the helmsman took our lives into his care.

When I awoke I found that we had indeed come to Perdóndaris, that famous city. For there it stood upon the left of us, a city fair and notable, and all the more pleasant for our eyes to see after the jungle that was so long with us. And we were anchored by the market-place, and the captain's merchandise was all displayed, and a merchant of Perdóndaris stood looking at it. And the captain had his scimitar in his hand, and was beating with it in anger upon the deck, and the splinters were flying up from the white planks; for the merchant had offered him a price for his merchandise that the captain declared to be an insult to himself and his country's gods, whom he now said to be great and terrible gods, whose curses were to be dreaded. But the merchant waved his hands, which were of great fatness, showing the pink palms, and swore that of himself he thought not at all, but only of the poor folk in the huts beyond the city to whom he wished to sell the merchandise for as low a price as possible, leaving no remuneration for himself. For the merchandise was mostly the thick toomarund carpets that

in the winter keep the wind from the floor, and tollub which the people smoke in pipes. Therefore the merchant said if he offered a piffek more the poor folk must go without their toomarunds when the winter came, and without their tollub in the evenings, or else he and his aged father must starve together. Thereat the captain lifted his scimitar to his own throat, saying that he was now a ruined man, and that nothing remained to him but death. And while he was carefully lifting his beard with his left hand, the merchant eyed the merchandise again, and said that rather than see so worthy a captain die, a man for whom he had conceived an especial love when first he saw the manner in which he handled his ship, he and his aged father should starve together and therefore he offered fifteen piffeks more.

When he said this the captain prostrated himself and prayed to his gods that they might yet sweeten this merchant's bitter heart — to his little lesser gods, to the gods that bless Belzoond.

At last the merchant offered yet five piffeks more. Then the captain wept, for he said that he was deserted of his gods; and the merchant also wept, for he said that he was thinking of his aged father, and of how he soon would starve, and he hid his weeping face with both his hands, and eyed the tollub again between his fingers. And so the bargain was concluded, and the merchant took the toomarund and tollub, paying for them out of a great clinking purse. And these were packed up into bales again, and three of the merchant's slaves carried them upon their heads into the city. And all the while the sailors had sat silent, cross-legged in a crescent upon the deck, eagerly watching the bargain, and now a murmur of satisfaction arose among them, and they began to compare it among themselves with other bargains that they had known. And I found out from them that there are seven merchants in Perdóndaris, and that they had all come to the captain one by one before the bargaining began, and each had warned him privately against the others. And to all the merchants the captain had offered the wine of his own country, that they make in fair Belzoond, but could in no wise persuade them to it. But now that the bargain was over, and the sailors were seated at the first meal of the day, the captain appeared among them with a cask of that wine, and we broached it with care and all made merry together. And the captain was glad in his heart because he knew that he had much honour in the eyes of his men because of the bargain that he had made. So the sailors drank the wine of their native land, and soon their thoughts were back in fair Belzoond and the little neighbouring cities of Durl and Duz.

But for me the captain poured into a little jar some heavy yellow wine from a small jar which he kept apart among his sacred things. Thick and sweet it was, even like honey, yet there was in its heart a mighty, ardent fire which had authority over souls of men. It was made, the captain told me, with great subtlety by the secret craft of a family of six who lived in a hut on the mountains of Hian Min. Once in these mountains, he said, he followed the spoor of a bear, and he came suddenly on a man of that family who had hunted the same bear, and he was at the end of a narrow way with precipice all about him, and his spear was sticking in the bear, and the wound was not fatal, and he had no other weapon. And the bear was walking towards the man, very slowly because his wound irked him — yet he was now very close. And what he captain did he would not say, but every year as soon as the snows are hard, and travelling is easy on the Hian Min, that man comes down to the market in the plains, and always leaves for the captain in the gate of fair Belzoond a vessel of that priceless secret wine.

And as I sipped the wine and the captain talked, I remembered me of stalwart noble things that I had long since resolutely planned, and my soul seemed to grow mightier within me and to dominate the whole tide of the Yann. It may be that I then slept. Or, if I did not, I do not now minutely recollect every detail of that morning's occupations. Towards evening, I awoke and wishing to see Perdóndaris before we left in the morning, and being unable to wake the captain, I went ashore alone. Certainly Perdóndaris was a powerful city; it was encompassed by a wall of great strength and altitude, having in it hollow ways for troops to walk in, and battlements along it all the way, and fifteen strong towers on it in every mile, and copper plaques low down where men could read them, telling in all the languages of those parts of the earth — one language on each plaque — the tale of how an army once attacked Perdóndaris and what befell that army. Then I entered Perdóndaris and found all the people dancing, clad in brilliant silks, and playing on the tambang as they danced. For a fearful thunderstorm had terrified them while I slept, and the fires of death, they said, had danced over Perdóndaris, and now the thunder had gone leaping away large and black and hideous, they said, over the distant hills, and had turned round snarling at them, shoving his gleaming teeth, and had stamped, as he went, upon the hilltops until they rang as though they had been bronze. And often and again they stopped in their merry dances and prayed to the God they knew not, saying, "O, God that we know not, we thank

Thee for sending the thunder back to his hills." And I went on and came to the market-place, and lying there upon the marble pavement I saw the merchant fast asleep and breathing heavily, with his face and the palms of his hands towards the sky, and slaves were fanning him to keep away the flies. And from the market-place I came to a silver temple and then to a palace of onyx, and there were many wonders in Perdóndaris, and I would have stayed and seen them all, but as I came to the outer wall of the city I suddenly saw in it a huge ivory gate. For a while I paused and admired it, then I came nearer and perceived the dreadful truth. The gate was carved out of one solid piece!

I fled at once through the gateway and down to the ship, and even as I ran I thought that I heard far off on the hills behind me the tramp of the fearful beast by whom that mass of ivory was shed, who was perhaps even then looking for his other tusk. When I was on the ship again I felt safer, and I said nothing to the sailors of what I had seen.

And now the captain was gradually awakening. Now night was rolling up from the East and North, and only the pinnacles of the towers of Perdóndaris still took the fallen sunlight. Then I went to the captain and told him quietly of the thing I had seen. And he questioned me at once about the gate, in a low voice, that the sailors might not know; and I told him how the weight of the thing was such that it could not have been brought from afar, and the captain knew that it had not been there a year ago. We agreed that such a beast could never have been killed by any assault of man, and that the gate must have been a fallen tusk, and one fallen near and recently. Therefore he decided that it were better to flee at once; so he commanded, and the sailors went to the sails, and others raised the anchor to the deck, and just as the highest pinnacle of marble lost the last rays of the sun we left Perdóndaris, that famous city. And night came down and cloaked Perdóndaris and hid it from our eyes, which as things have happened will never see it again; for I have heard since that something swift and wonderful has suddenly wrecked Perdóndaris in a day — towers, walls and people.

And the night deepened over the River Yann, a night all white with stars. And with the night there rose the helmsman's song. As soon as he had prayed he began to sing to cheer himself all through the lonely night. But first he prayed, praying the helmsman's prayer. And this is what I remember

of it, rendered into English with a very feeble equivalent of the rhythm that seemed so resonant in those tropic nights.

To whatever god may hear.

Wherever there be sailors whether of river or sea: whether their way be dark or whether through storm: whether their peril be of beast or of rock: or from enemy lurking on land or pursuing on sea: wherever the tiller is cold or the helmsman stiff: wherever sailors sleep or helmsmen watch: guard, guide and return us to the old land, that has known us: to the far homes that we know.

To all the gods that are.

To whatever god may hear.

So he prayed, and there was silence. And the sailors laid them down to rest for the night. The silence deepened, and was only broken by the ripples of Yann that lightly touched our prow. Sometimes some monster of the river coughed.

Silence and ripples, ripples and silence again.

And then his loneliness came upon the helmsman, and he began to sing. And he sang the market songs of Durl and Duz, and the old dragon-legends of Belzoond.

Many a song he sang, telling to spacious and exotic Yann the little tales and trifles of his city of Durl. And the songs welled up over the black jungle and came into the clear cold air above, and the great bands of stars that look on Yann began to know the affairs of Durl and Duz, and of the shepherds that dwelt in the fields between, and the flocks that they had, and the loves that they had loved, and all the little things that they had hoped to do. And as I lay wrapped up in skins and blankets, listening to those songs, and watching the fantastic shapes of the great trees like to black giants stalking through the night, I suddenly fell asleep.

When I awoke great mists were trailing away from the Yann. And the flow of the river was tumbling now tumultuously, and little waves appeared; for Yann had scented from afar the ancient crags of Glorm, and knew that their ravines lay cool before him wherein he should meet the merry wild Irillion rejoicing from fields of snow. So he shook off from him the torpid sleep that had come upon him in the hot and scented jungle, and forgot its orchids and its butterflies, and swept on turbulent, expectant, strong; and soon the snowy peaks of the Hills of Glorm came glittering into view. And now the sailors were waking up from sleep. Soon we all ate, and then the

helmsman laid him down to sleep while a comrade took his place, and they all spread over him their choicest furs.

And in a while we heard the sound that the Irillion made as she came down dancing from the fields of snow.

And then we saw the ravine in the Hills of Glorm lying precipitous and smooth before us, into which we were carried by the leaps of Yann. And now we left the steamy jungle and breathed the mountain air; the sailors stood up and took deep breaths of it, and thought of their own far off Acroctian hills on which were Durl and Duz — below them in the plains stands fair Belzoond.

A great shadow brooded between the cliffs of Glorm, but the crags were shining above us like gnarled moons, and almost lit the gloom. Louder and louder came the Irillion's song, and the sound of her dancing down from the fields of snow. And soon we saw her white and full of mists, and wreathed with rainbows delicate and small that she had plucked up near the mountain's summit from some celestial garden of the Sun. Then she went away seawards with the huge grey Yann and the ravine widened, and opened upon the world, and our rocking ship came through to the light of the day.

And all that morning and all the afternoon we passed through the marshes of Pondoovery; and Yann widened there, and flowed solemnly and slowly, and the captain bade the sailors beat on bells to overcome the dreariness of the marshes.

At last the Irusian mountains came in sight, nursing the villages of Pen-Kai and Blut, and the wandering streets of Mlo, where priests propitiate the avalanche with wine and maize. Then night came down over the plains of Tlun, and we saw the lights of Cappadarnia. We heard the Pathnites beating upon drums as we passed Imaut and Golzunda, then all but the helmsman slept. And villages scattered along the banks of the Yann heard all that night in the helmsman's unknown tongue the little songs of cities that they knew not.

I awoke before dawn with a feeling that I was unhappy before I remembered why. Then I recalled that by the evening of the approaching day, according to all foreseen probabilities, we should come to Bar-Wul-Yann, and I should part from the captain and his sailors. And I had liked the man because he had given me of his yellow wine that was set apart among his sacred things, and many a story he had told me about his fair Belzoond

between the Acroctian hills and the Hian Min. And I had liked the ways that his sailors had, and the prayers that they prayed at evening side by side, grudging not one another their alien gods. And I had a liking too for the tender way in which they often spoke of Durl and Duz, for it is good that men should love their native cities and the little hills that hold those cities up.

And I had come to know who would meet them when they returned to their homes, and where they thought the meetings would take place, some in a valley of the Acroctian hills where the road comes up from Yann, others in the gateway of one or another of the three cities, and others by the fireside in the home. And I thought of the danger that had menaced us all alike outside Perdóndaris, a danger that, as things have happened, was very real.

And I thought too of the helmsman's cheery song in the cold and lonely night, and how he had held our lives in his careful hands. And as I thought of this the helmsman ceased to sing, and I looked up and saw a pale light had appeared in the sky, and the lonely night had passed; and the dawn widened, and the sailors awoke.

And soon we saw the tide of the Sea himself advancing resolute between Yann's borders, and Yann sprang lithely at him and they struggled awhile; then Yann and all that was his were pushed back northward, so that the sailors had to hoist the sails and, the wind being favorable, we still held onwards.

And we passed Gondara and Narl and Haz. And we saw memorable, holy Golnuz, and heard the pilgrims praying.

When we awoke after the midday rest we were coming near to Nen, the last of the cities on the River Yann. And the jungle was all about us once again, and about Nen; but the great Mloon ranges stood up over all things, and watched the city from beyond the jungle.

Here we anchored, and the captain and I went up into the city and found that the Wanderers had come into Nen.

And the Wanderers were a weird, dark, tribe, that once in every seven years came down from the peaks of Mloon, having crossed by a pass that is known to them from some fantastic land that lies beyond. And the people of Nen were all outside their houses, and all stood wondering at their own streets. For the men and women of the Wanderers had crowded all the ways, and every one was doing some strange thing. Some danced astounding

dances that they had learned from the desert wind, rapidly curving and swirling till the eye could follow no longer. Others played upon instruments beautiful wailing tunes that were full of horror, which souls had taught them lost by night in the desert, that strange far desert from which the Wanderers came.

None of their instruments were such as were known in Nen nor in any part of the region of the Yann; even the horns out of which some were made were of beasts that none had seen along the river, for they were barbed at the tips. And they sang, in the language of none, songs that seemed to be akin to the mysteries of night and to the unreasoned fear that haunts dark places.

Bitterly all the dogs of Nen distrusted them. And the Wanderers told one another fearful tales, for though no one in Nen knew ought of their language yet they could see the fear on the listeners' faces, and as the tale wound on the whites of their eyes showed vividly in terror as the eyes of some little beast whom the hawk has seized. Then the teller of the tale would smile and stop, and another would tell his story, and the teller of the first tale's lips would chatter with fear. And if some deadly snake chanced to appear the Wanderers would greet him as a brother, and the snake would seem to give his greetings to them before he passed on again. Once that most fierce and lethal of tropic snakes, the giant lythra, came out of the jungle and all down the street, the central street of Nen, and none of the Wanderers moved away from him, but they all played sonorously on drums, as though he had been a person of much honour; and the snake moved through the midst of them and smote none.

Even the Wanderers' children could do strange things, for if any one of them met with a child of Nen the two would stare at each other in silence with large grave eyes; then the Wanderers' child would slowly draw from his turban a live fish or snake. And the children of Nen could do nothing of that kind at all.

Much I should have wished to stay and hear the hymn with which they greet the night, that is answered by the wolves on the heights of Mloon, but it was now time to raise the anchor again that the captain might return from Bar-Wul-Yann upon the landward tide. So we went on board and continued down the Yann. And the captain and I spoke little, for we were thinking of our parting, which should be for long, and we watched instead the splendour of the westerning sun. For the sun was a ruddy gold, but a faint

mist cloaked the jungle, lying low, and into it poured the smoke of the little jungle cities, and the smoke of them met together in the mist and joined into one haze, which became purple, and was lit by the sun, as the thoughts of men become hallowed by some great and sacred thing. Some times one column from a lonely house would rise up higher than the cities' smoke, and gleam by itself in the sun.

And now as the sun's last rays were nearly level, we saw the sight that I had come to see, for from two mountains that stood on either shore two cliffs of pink marble came out into the river, all glowing in the light of the low sun, and they were quite smooth and of mountainous altitude, and they nearly met, and Yann went tumbling between them and found the sea.

And this was Bar-Wul-Yann, the Gate of Yann, and in the distance through that barrier's gap I saw the azure indescribable sea, where little fishing-boats went gleaming by.

And the sun set, and the brief twilight came, and the exultation of the glory of Bar-Wul-Yann was gone, yet still the pink cliffs glowed, the fairest marvel that the eye beheld — and this in a land of wonders. And soon the twilight gave place to the coming out of stars, and the colours of Bar-Wul-Yann went dwindling away. And the sight of those cliffs was to me as some chord of music that a master's hand had launched from the violin, and which carries to Heaven or Faëry the tremulous spirits of men.

And now by the shore they anchored and went no further, for they were sailors of the river and not of the sea, and knew the Yann but not the tides beyond.

And the time was come when the captain and I must part, he to go back to his fair Belzoond in sight of the distant peaks of the Hian Min, and I to find my way by strange means back to those hazy fields that all poets know, wherein stand small mysterious cottages through whose windows, looking westwards, you may see the fields of men, and looking eastwards see glittering elfin mountains, tipped with snow, going range on range into the region of Myth, and beyond it into the kingdom of Fantasy, which pertain to the Lands of Dream. Long we regarded one another, knowing that we should meet no more, for my fancy is weakening as the years slip by, and I go ever more seldom into the Lands of Dream. Then we clasped hands, uncouthly on his part, for it is not the method of greeting in his country, and he commended my soul to the care of his own gods, to his little lesser gods, the humble ones, to the gods that bless Belzoond.

THE SWORD AND THE IDOL

It was a cold winter's evening late in the Stone Age; the sun had gone down blazing over the plains of Thold; there were no clouds, only the chill blue sky and the imminence of stars; and the surface of the sleeping Earth began to harden against the cold of the night. Presently from their lairs arose, and shook themselves and went stealthily forth, those of Earth's children to whom it is the law to prowl abroad as soon as the dusk has fallen. And they went pattering softly over the plain, and their eyes shone in the dark, and crossed and recrossed one another in their courses. Suddenly there became manifest in the midst of the plain that fearful portent of the presence of Man — a little flickering fire. And the children of Earth who prowl abroad by night looked sideways at it and snarled and edged away; all but the wolves, who came a little nearer, for it was winter and the wolves were hungry, and they had come in thousands from the mountains, and they said in their hearts, "We are strong." Around the fire a little tribe was encamped. They, too, had come from the mountains, and from lands beyond them, but it was in the mountains that the wolves first winded them; they picked up bones at first that the tribe had dropped, but they were closer now and on all sides. It was Loz who had lit the fire. He had killed a small furry beast, hurling his stone axe at it, and had gathered a quantity of reddish-brown stones, and had laid them in a long row, and placed bits of the small beast all along it; then he lit a fire on each side, and the stones heated, and the bits began to cook. It was at this time that the tribe noticed that the wolves who had followed them so far were no longer content with the scraps of deserted encampments. A line of yellow eyes surrounded them, and when it moved it was to come nearer. So the men of the tribe hastily tore up brushwood, and felled a small tree with their flint axes, and heaped it all over the fire that Loz had made, and for a while the great heap hid the flame, and the wolves came trotting in and sat down again on their haunches much closer than before; and the fierce and valiant dogs that belonged to the tribe believed that their end was about to come while fighting, as they had long since prophesied it would. Then the flame caught the lofty stack of brushwood, and rushed out of it, and ran up the side of it, and stood up haughtily far over the top, and the wolves seeing this terrible ally of Man reveling there in his strength, and knowing nothing of this frequent treachery to his

masters, went slowly away as though they had other purposes. And for the rest of that night the dogs of the encampment cried out to them and besought them to come back. But the tribe lay down all round the fire under thick furs and slept. And a great wind arose and blew into the roaring heart of the fire till it was red no longer, but all pallid with heat. With the dawn the tribe awoke.

Loz might have known that after such a mighty conflagration nothing could remain of his small furry beast, but there was hunger in him and little reason as he searched among the ashes. What he found there amazed him beyond measure; there was no meat, there was not even his row of reddish-brown stones, but something longer than a man's leg and narrower than his hand, was lying there like a great flattened snake. When Loz looked at its thin edges and saw that it ran to a point, he picked up stones to chip it and make it sharp. It was the instinct of Loz to sharpen things. When he found that it could not be chipped his wonderment increased. It was many hours before he discovered that he could sharpen the edges by rubbing them with a stone; but at last the point was sharp, and all one side of it except near the end, where Loz held it in his hand. And Loz lifted it and brandished it, and the Stone Age was over. That afternoon in the little encampment, just as the tribe moved on, the Stone Age passed away, which, for perhaps thirty or forty thousand years, had slowly lifted Man from among the beasts and left him with his supremacy beyond all hope of reconquest.

It was not for many days that any other man tried to make for himself an iron sword by cooking the same kind of small furry beast that Loz had tried to cook. It was not for many years that any thought to lay the meat along stones as Loz had done; and when they did, being no longer on the plains of Thold, they used flints or chalk. It was not for many generations that another piece of iron ore was melted and the secret slowly guessed. Nevertheless one of Earth's many veils was torn aside by Loz to give us ultimately the steel sword and the plough, machinery and factories; let us not blame Loz if we think that he did wrong, for he did all in ignorance. The tribe moved on until it came to water, and there it settled down under a hill, and they built their huts there. Very soon they had to fight with another tribe, a tribe that was stronger than they; but the sword of Loz was terrible and his tribe slew their foes. You might make one blow at Loz, but then would come one thrust from that iron sword, and there was no way of surviving it. No one could fight with Loz. And he became ruler of the tribe

in the place of Iz, who hitherto had ruled it with his sharp axe, as his father had before him.

Now Loz begat Lo, and in his old age gave his sword to him, and Lo ruled the tribe with it. And Lo called the name of the sword Death, because it was so swift and terrible.

And Iz begat Ird, who was of no account. And Ird hated Lo because he was of no account by reason of the iron sword of Lo.

One night Ird stole down to the hut of Lo, carrying his sharp axe, and he went very softly, but Lo's dog, Warner, heard him coming, and he growled softly by his master's door. When Ird came to the hut he heard Lo talking gently to his sword. And Lo was saying, "Lie still, Death. Rest, rest, old sword," and then, "What, again, Death? Be still. Be still."

And then again: "What, art thou hungry, Death? Or thirsty, poor old sword? Soon, Death, soon. Be still only a little."

But Ird fled, for he did not like the gentle tone of Lo as he spoke to his sword.

And Lo begat Lod. And when Lo died Lod took the iron sword and ruled the tribe.

And Ird begat Ith, who was of no account, like his father.

Now when Lod had smitten a man or killed a terrible beast, Ith would go away for a while into the forest rather than hear the praises that would be given to Lod.

And once, as Ith sat in the forest waiting for the day to pass, he suddenly thought he saw a tree trunk looking at him as with a face. And Ith was afraid, for trees should not look at men. But soon Ith saw that it was only a tree and not a man, though it was like a man. Ith used to speak to this tree, and tell it about Lod, for he dared not speak to any one else about him. And Ith found comfort in speaking about Lod.

One day Ith went with his stone axe into the forest, and stayed there many days.

He came back by night, and the next morning when the tribe awoke they saw something that was like a man and yet was not a man. And it sat on the hill with its elbows pointing outwards and was quite still. And Ith was crouching before it, and hurriedly placing before it fruits and flesh, and then leaping away from it and looking frightened. Presently all the tribe came

out to see, but dared not come quite close because of the fear that they saw on the face of Ith. And Ith went to his hut, and came back again with a hunting spear-head and valuable small stone knives, and reached out and laid them before the thing that was like a man, and then sprang away from it.

And some of the tribe questioned Ith about the still thing that was like a man, and Ith said, “This is Ged.” Then they asked, “Who is Ged?” and Ith said, “Ged sends the crops and the rain; and the sun and the moon are Ged’s.”

Then the tribe went back to their huts, but later in the day some came again, and they said to Ith, “Ged is only as we are, having hands and feet.” And Ith pointed to the right hand of Ged, which was not as his left, but was shaped like the paw of a beast, and Ith said, “By this ye may know that he is not as any man.”

Then they said, “He is indeed Ged.” But Lod said, “He speaketh not, nor doth he eat,” and Ith answered, “The thunder is his voice and the famine is his eating.”

After this the tribe copied Ith, and brought little gifts of meat to Ged; and Ith cooked them before him that Ged might smell the cooking.

One day a great thunderstorm came trampling up from the distance and raged among the hills, and the tribe all hid away from it in their huts. And Ith appeared among the huts looking unafraid. And Ith said little, but the tribe thought that he had expected the terrible storm because the meat that they had laid before Ged had been tough meat, and not the best parts of the beasts they slew.

And Ged grew to have more honour among the tribe than Lod. And Lod was vexed.

One night Lod arose when all were asleep, and quieted his dog, and took his iron sword and went away to the hill. And he came on Ged in the starlight, sitting still, with his elbows pointing outwards, and his beast’s paw, and the mark of the fire on the ground where his food had been cooked.

And Lod stood there for a while in great fear, trying to keep to his purpose. Suddenly he stepped up close to Ged and lifted his iron sword, and Ged neither hit nor shrank. Then the thought came into Lod’s mind, “Ged does not hit. What will Ged do instead?”

And Lod lowered his sword and struck not, and his imagination began to work on that "What will Ged do instead?"

And the more Lod thought, the worse was his fear of Ged.

And Lod ran away and left him.

Lod still ruled the tribe in battle or in the hunt, but the chiefest spoils of battle were given to Ged, and the beasts that they slew were Ged's; and all questions that concerned war or peace, and questions of law and disputes, were always brought to him, and Ith gave the answers after speaking to Ged by night.

At last Ith said, the day after an eclipse, that the gifts which they brought to Ged were not enough, that some far greater sacrifice was needed, that Ged was very angry even now, and not to be appeased by any ordinary sacrifice.

And Ith said that to save the tribe from the anger of Ged he would speak to Ged that night, and ask him what new sacrifice he needed.

Deep in his heart Lod shuddered, for his instinct told him that Ged wanted Lod's only son, who should hold the iron sword when Lod was gone.

No one would dare touch Lod because of the iron sword, but his instinct said in his slow mind again and again, "Ged loves Ith. Ith has said so. Ith hates the sword-holders."

"Ith hates the sword-holders. Ged loves Ith."

Evening fell and the night came when Ith should speak with Ged, and Lod became ever surer of the doom of his race.

He lay down but could not sleep.

Midnight had barely come when Lod arose and went with his iron sword again to the hill.

And there sat Ged. Had Ith been to him yet? Ith whom Ged loved, who hated the sword-holders.

And Lod looked long at the old sword of iron that had come to his grandfather on the plains of Thold.

Good-bye, old sword! And Lod laid it on the knees of Ged, then went away.

And when Ith came, a little before dawn, the sacrifice was found acceptable unto Ged.

THE IDLE CITY

There was once a city which was an idle city, wherein men told vain tales.

And it was that city's custom to tax all men that would enter in, with the toll of some idle story in the gate.

So all men paid to the watchers in the gate the toll of an idle story, and passed into the city unhindered and unhurt. And in a certain hour of the night when the king of that city arose and went pacing swiftly up and down the chamber of his sleeping, and called upon the name of the dead queen, then would the watchers fasten up the gate and go into that chamber to the king, and, sitting on the floor, would tell him all the tales that they had gathered. And listening to them some calmer mood would come upon the king, and listening still he would lie down again and at last fall asleep, and all the watchers silently would arise and steal away from the chamber.

A while ago wandering, I came to the gate of that city. And even as I came a man stood up to pay his toll to the watchers. They were seated cross-legged on the ground between him and the gate, and each one held a spear. Near him two other travellers sat on the warm sand waiting. And the man said:

"Now the city of Nombros forsook the worship of the gods and turned towards God. So the gods threw their cloaks over their faces and strode away from the city, and going into the haze among the hills passed through the trunks of the olive groves into the sunset. But when they had already left the Earth, they turned and looked through the gleaming folds of the twilight for the last time at their city; and they looked half in anger and half in regret, then turned and went away for ever. But they sent back a Death, who bore a scythe, saying to it: 'Slay half in the city that forsook us, but half of them spare alive that they may yet remember their old forsaken gods.'

"But God sent a destroying angel to show that He was God, saying unto him: 'Go into that city and slay half of the dwellers therein, yet spare a half of them that they may know that I am God.'

"And at once the destroying angel put his hand to his sword, and the sword came out of the scabbard with a deep breath, like to the breath that a broad woodman takes before his first blow at some giant oak. Thereat the angel pointed his arms downwards, and bending his head between them, fell forward from Heaven's edge, and the spring of his ankles shot him

downwards with his wings furled behind him. So he went slanting earthward through the evening with his sword stretched out before him, and he was like a javelin that some hunter hath hurled that returneth again to the earth: but just before he touched it he lifted his head and spread his wings with the under feathers forward, and alighted by the bank of the broad Flavro that divides the city of Nombros. And down the bank of the Flavro he fluttered low, like to a hawk over a new-cut cornfield when the little creatures of the corn are shelterless, and at the same time down the other bank the Death from the gods went mowing.

"At once they saw each other, and the angel glared at the Death, and the Death leered back at him, and the flames in the eyes of the angel illumined with a red glare the mist that lay in the hollows of the sockets of the Death. Suddenly they fell on one another, sword to scythe. And the angel captured the temples of the gods, and set up over them the sign of God, and the Death captured the temples of God, and led into them the ceremonies and sacrifices of the gods; and all the while the centuries slipped quietly by, going down the Flavro seawards.

"And now some worship God in the temple of the gods, and others worship the gods in the temple of God, and still the angel hath not returned again to the rejoicing choirs, and still the Death hath not gone back to die with the dead gods; but all through Nombros they fight up and down, and still on each side of the Flavro the city lives."

And the watchers in the gate said, "Enter in."

Then another traveler rose up, and said:

"Solemnly between Huhenwazy and Nitcrana the huge grey clouds came floating. And those great mountains, heavenly Huhenwazi and Nitcrana, the king of peaks, greeted them, calling them brothers. And the clouds were glad of their greeting, for they meet with companions seldom in the lonely heights of the sky.

"But the vapours of evening said unto the earth-mist, 'What are those shapes that dare to move above us and to go where Nitcrana is and Huhenwazi?'

"And the earth-mist said in answer unto the vapours of evening, 'It is only an earth-mist that has become mad and has left the warm and comfortable earth, and has in his madness thought that his place is with Huhenwazi and Nitcrana.'

“‘Once,’ said the vapours of evening, ‘there were clouds, but this was many and many a day ago, as our forefathers have said. Perhaps the mad one thinks he is the clouds.’

“Then spake the earth-worms from the warm deeps of the mud, saying ‘O earth-mist, thou art indeed the clouds, and there are no clouds but thou. And as for Huhenwazi and Nitcrana, I cannot see them, and therefore they are not high, and there are no mountains in the world but those that I cast up every morning out of the deeps of the mud.’

“And the earth-mist and the vapours of evening were glad at the voice of the earth-worms, and looking earthward believed what they had said.

“And indeed it is better to be as the earth-mist, and to keep close to the warm mud at night, and to hear the earth-worm’s comfortable speech, and not to be a wanderer in the cheerless heights, but to leave the mountains alone with their desolate snow, to draw what comfort they can from their vast aspect over all the cities of men, and from the whispers that they hear at evening of unknown distant gods.”

And the watchers in the gate said, “Enter in.”

Then a man stood up who came out of the west, and told a western tale. He said:

“There is a road in Rome that runs through an ancient temple that once the gods had loved; it runs along the top of a great wall, and the floor of the temple lies far down beneath it, of marble, pink and white.

“Upon the temple floor I counted to the number of thirteen hungry cats.

“‘Sometimes,’ they said among themselves, ‘it was the gods that lived here, sometimes it was men, and now it’s cats. So let us enjoy the sun on the hot marble before another people comes.’

“For it was at that hour of a warm afternoon when my fancy is able to hear silent voices.

“And the awful leanness of all those thirteen cats moved me to go into a neighbouring fish shop, and there to buy a quantity of fishes. Then I returned and threw them all over the railing at the top of the great wall, and they fell for thirty feet, and hit the sacred marble with a smack.

“Now, in any other town but Rome, or in the minds of any other cats, the sight of fishes falling out of heaven had surely excited wonder. They rose slowly, and all stretched themselves, then they came leisurely towards the fishes. ‘It is only a miracle,’ they said in their hearts.”

And the watchers in the gate said, “Enter in.”

Proudly and slowly, as they spoke, drew up to them a camel, whose rider sought entrance to the city. His face shone with the sunset by which for long he had steered for the city's gate. Of him they demanded toll. Whereat he spoke to his camel, and the camel roared and kneeled, and the man descended from him. And the man unwrapped from many silks a box of divers metals wrought by the Japanese, and on the lid of it were figures of men who gazed from some shore at an isle of the Inland Sea. This he showed to the watchers, and when they had seen it, said, "It has seemed to me that these speak to each other thus:

"'Behold now Oojni, the dear one of the sea, the little mother sea that hath no storms. She goeth out from Oojni singing a song, and she returneth singing over her sands. Little is Oojni in the lap of the sea, and scarce to be perceived by wondering ships. White sails have never wafted her legends afar, they are told not by bearded wanderers of the sea. Her fireside tales are known not to the North, the dragons of China have not heard of them, nor those that ride on elephants through Ind.

"'Men tell the tales and the smoke ariseth upwards; the smoke departeth and the tales are told.

"'Oojni is not a name among the nations, she is not know of where the merchants meet, she is not spoken of by alien lips.

"'Indeed, but Oojni is a little among the isles, yet is she loved by those that know her coasts and her inland places hidden from the sea.

"Without glory, without fame, and without wealth, Oojni is greatly loved by a little people, and by a few; yet not by few, for all her dead still love her, and oft by night come whispering through her woods. Who could forget Oojni even among the dead?

"For here in Oojni, wot you, are homes of men, and gardens, and golden temples of the gods, and sacred places inshore from the sea, and many murmurous woods. And there is a path that winds over the hills to go into mysterious holy lands where dance by night the spirits of the woods, or sing unseen in the sunlight; and no one goes into these holy lands, for who that love Oojni could rob her of her mysteries, and the curious aliens come not. Indeed, but we love Oojni though she is so little; she is the little mother of our race, and the kindly nurse of all seafaring birds.

"And behold, even now caressing her, the gentle fingers of the mother sea, whose dreams are far with that old wanderer Ocean.

“And yet let us forget not Fuzi-Yama, for he stands manifest over clouds and sea, misty below, and vague and indistinct, but clear above for all the isles to watch. The ships make all their journeys in his sight, the nights and the days go by him like a wind, the summers and winters under him flicker and fade, the lives of men pass quietly here and hence, and Fuzi-Yama watches there — and knows.”

And the watchers in the gate said, “Enter in.”

And I, too, would have told them a tale, very wonderful and very true; one that I had told in many cities, which as yet had no believers. But now the sun had set, and the brief twilight gone, and ghostly silences were rising from far and darkening hills. A stillness hung over that city’s gate. And the great silence of the solemn night was more acceptable to the watchers in the gate than any sound of man. Therefore they beckoned to us, and motioned with their hands that we should pass untaxed into the city. And softly we went up over the sand, and between the high rock pillars of the gate, and a deep stillness settled among the watchers, and the stars over them twinkled undisturbed.

For how short a while man speaks, and withal how vainly. And for how long he is silent. Only the other day I met a king in Thebes, who had been silent already for four thousand years.

THE HASHISH MAN

I was at a dinner in London the other day. The ladies had gone upstairs, and no one sat on my right; on my left there was a man I did not know, but he knew my name somehow apparently, for he turned to me after a while, and said, “I read a story of yours about Bethmoora in a review.”

Of course I remembered the tale. It was about a beautiful Oriental city that was suddenly deserted in a day — nobody quite knew why. I said, “Oh, yes,” and slowly searched in my mind for some more fitting acknowledgment of the compliment that his memory had paid me.

I was greatly astonished when he said, “You were wrong about the gnousar sickness; it was not that at all.”

I said, “Why! Have you been there?”

And he said, “Yes; I do it with hashish. I know Bethmoora well.” And he took out of his pocket a small box full of some black stuff that looked like tar, but had a stranger smell. He warned me not to touch it with my finger, as the stain remained for days. “I got it from a gipsy,” he said. “He had a lot of it, as it had killed his father.” But I interrupted him, for I wanted to know for certain what it was that had made desolate that beautiful city, Bethmoora, and why they fled from it swiftly in a day. “Was it because of the Desert’s curse?” I asked. And he said, “Partly it was the fury of the Desert and partly the advice of the Emperor Thuba Mleen, for that fearful beast is in some way connected with the Desert on his mother’s side.” And he told me this strange story: “You remember the sailor with the black scar, who was there on the day that you described when the messengers came on mules to the gate of Bethmoora, and all the people fled. I met this man in a tavern, drinking rum, and he told me all about the flight from Bethmoora, but knew no more than you did what the message was, or who had sent it. However, he said he would see Bethmoora once more whenever he touched again at an eastern port, even if he had to face the Devil. He often said that he would face the Devil to find out the mystery of that message that emptied Bethmoora in a day. And in the end he had to face Thuba Mleen, whose weak ferocity he had not imagined. For one day the sailor told me he had found a ship, and I met him no more after that in the tavern drinking rum. It was about that time that I got the hashish from the gipsy, who had a quantity that he did not want. It takes one literally out of oneself. It is like

wings. You swoop over distant countries and into other worlds. Once I found out the secret of the universe. I have forgotten what it was, but I know that the Creator does not take Creation seriously, for I remember that He sat in Space with all His work in front of Him and laughed. I have seen incredible things in fearful worlds. As it is your imagination that takes you there, so it is only by your imagination that you can get back. Once out in aether I met a battered, prowling spirit, that had belonged to a man whom drugs had killed a hundred years ago; and he led me to regions that I had never imagined; and we parted in anger beyond the Pleiades, and I could not imagine my way back. And I met a huge grey shape that was the Spirit of some great people, perhaps of a whole star, and I besought It to show me my way home, and It halted beside me like a sudden wind and pointed, and, speaking quite softly, asked me if I discerned a certain tiny light, and I saw a far star faintly, and then It said to me, 'That is the Solar System,' and strode tremendously on. And somehow I imagined my way back, and only just in time, for my body was already stiffening in a chair in my room; and the fire had gone out and everything was cold, and I had to move each finger one by one, and there were pins and needles in them, and dreadful pains in the nails, which began to thaw; and at last I could move one arm, and reached a bell, and for a long time no one came, because every one was in bed. But at last a man appeared, and they got a doctor; and HE said that it was hashish poisoning, but it would have been all right if I hadn't met that battered, prowling spirit.

"I could tell you astounding things that I have seen, but you want to know who sent that message to Bethmoora. Well, it was Thuba Mleen. And this is how I know. I often went to the city after that day you wrote of (I used to take hashish of an evening in my flat), and I always found it uninhabited. Sand had poured into it from the desert, and the streets were yellow and smooth, and through open, swinging doors the sand had drifted.

"One evening I had put the guard in front of the fire, and settled into a chair and eaten my hashish, and the first thing that I saw when I came to Bethmoora was the sailor with the black scar, strolling down the street, and making footprints in the yellow sand. And now I knew that I should see what secret power it was that kept Bethmoora uninhabited.

"I saw that there was anger in the Desert, for there were storm clouds heaving along the skyline, and I heard a muttering amongst the sand.

“The sailor strolled on down the street, looking into the empty houses as he went; sometimes he shouted and sometimes he sang, and sometimes he wrote his name on a marble wall. Then he sat down on a step and ate his dinner. After a while he grew tired of the city, and came back up the street. As he reached the gate of green copper three men on camels appeared.

“I could do nothing. I was only a consciousness, invisible, wandering: my body was in Europe. The sailor fought well with his fists, but he was over-powered and bound with ropes, and led away through the Desert.

“I followed for as long as I could stay, and found that they were going by the way of the Desert round the Hills of Hap towards Utnar Véhi, and then I knew that the camel men belonged to Thuba Mleen.

“I work in an insurance office all day, and I hope you won’t forget me if ever you want to insure — life, fire, or motor — but that’s no part of my story. I was desperately anxious to get back to my flat, though it is not good to take hashish two days running; but I wanted to see what they would do to the poor fellow, for I had heard bad rumours about Thuba Mleen. When at last I got away I had a letter to write; then I rang for my servant, and told him that I must not be disturbed, though I left my door unlocked in case of accidents. After that I made up a good fire, and sat down and partook of the pot of dreams. I was going to the palace of Thuba Mleen.

“I was kept back longer than usual by noises in the street, but suddenly I was up above the town; the European countries rushed by beneath me, and there appeared the thin white palace spires of horrible Thuba Mleen. I found him presently at the end of a little narrow room. A curtain of red leather hung behind him, on which all the names of God, written in Yannish, were worked with a golden thread. Three windows were small and high. The Emperor seemed no more than about twenty, and looked small and weak. No smiles came on his nasty yellow face, though he tittered continually. As I looked from his low forehead to his quivering under lip, I became aware that there was some horror about him, though I was not able to perceive what it was. And then I saw it — the man never blinked; and though later on I watched those eyes for a blink, it never happened once.

“And then I followed the Emperor’s rapt glance, and I saw the sailor lying on the floor, alive but hideously rent, and the royal torturers were at work all round him. They had torn long strips from him, but had not detached them, and they were torturing the ends of them far away from the sailor.” The man that I met at dinner told me many things which I must

omit. “The sailor was groaning softly, and every time he groaned Thuba Mleen tittered. I had no sense of smell, but I could hear and see, and I do not know which was the most revolting — the terrible condition of the sailor or the happy unblinking face of horrible Thuba Mleen.

“I wanted to go away, but the time was not yet come, and I had to stay where I was.

“Suddenly the Emperor’s face began to twitch violently and his under lip quivered faster, and he whimpered with anger, and cried with a shrill voice, in Yannish, to the captain of his torturers that there was a spirit in the room. I feared not, for living men cannot lay hands on a spirit, but all the torturers were appalled at his anger, and stopped their work, for their hands trembled in fear. Then two men of the spear-guard slipped from the room, and each of them brought back presently a golden bowl, with knobs on it, full of hashish; and the bowls were large enough for heads to have floated in had they been filled with blood. And the two men fell to rapidly, each eating with two great spoons — there was enough in each spoonful to have given dreams to a hundred men. And there came upon them soon the hashish state, and their spirits hovered, preparing to go free, while I feared horribly, but ever and anon they fell back again to their bodies, recalled by some noise in the room. Still the men ate, but lazily now, and without ferocity. At last the great spoons dropped out of their hands, and their spirits rose and left them. I could not flee. And the spirits were more horrible than the men, because they were young men, and not yet wholly moulded to fit their fearful souls. Still the sailor groaned softly, evoking little titters from the Emperor Thuba Mleen. Then the two spirits rushed at me, and swept me thence as gusts of wind sweep butterflies, and away we went from that small, pale, heinous man. There was no escaping from these spirits’ fierce insistence. The energy in my minute lump of the drug was overwhelmed by the huge spoonsful that these men had eaten with both hands. I was whirled over Arvle Woondery, and brought to the lands of Snith, and swept on still until I came to Kragua, and beyond this to those bleak lands that are nearly unknown to fancy. And we came at last to those ivory hills that are named the Mountains of Madness, and I tried to struggle against the spirits of that frightful Emperor’s men, for I heard on the other side of the ivory hills the pittering of those beasts that prey on the mad, as they prowled up and down. It was no fault of mine that my little lump of hashish could not fight with their horrible spoonsful….”

Some one was tugging at the hall-door bell. Presently a servant came and told our host that a policeman in the hall wished to speak to him at once. He apologised to us, and went outside, and we heard a man in heavy boots, who spoke in a low voice to him. My friend got up and walked over to the window, and opened it, and looked outside. “I should think it will be a fine night,” he said. Then he jumped out. When we put our astonished heads out of the window to look for him, he was already out of sight.

POOR OLD BILL

On an antique haunt of sailors, a tavern of the sea, the light of day was fading. For several evenings I had frequented this place, in the hope of hearing something from the sailors, as they sat over strange wines, about a rumour that had reached my ears of a certain fleet of galleons of old Spain still said to be afloat in the South Seas in some uncharted region.

In this I was again to be disappointed. Talk was low and seldom, and I was about to leave, when a sailor, wearing ear-rings of pure gold, lifted up his head from his wine, and looking straight before him at the wall, told his tale loudly:

(When later on a storm of rain arose and thundered on the tavern's leaded panes, he raised his voice without effort and spoke on still. The darker it got the clearer his wild eyes shone.)

"A ship with sails of the olden time was nearing fantastic isles. We had never seen such isles.

"We all hated the captain, and he hated us. He hated us all alike, there was no favouritism about him. And he never would talk a word with any of us, except sometimes in the evening when it was getting dark he would stop and look up and talk a bit to the men he had hanged at the yard-arm.

"We were a mutinous crew. But Captain was the only man that had pistols. He slept with one under his pillow and kept one close beside him. There was a nasty look about the isles. They were small and flat as though they had come up only recently from the sea, and they had no sand or rocks like honest isles, but green grass down to the water. And there were little cottages there whose looks we did not like. Their thatches came almost down to the ground, and were strangely turned up at the corners, and under the low eaves were queer dark windows whose little leaded panes were too thick to see through. And no one, man or beast, was walking about, so that you could not know what kind of people lived there. But Captain knew. And he went ashore and into one of the cottages, and someone lit lights inside, and the little windows wore an evil look.

"It was quite dark when he came aboard again, and he bade a cheery good-night to the men that swung from the yard-arm and he eyed us in a way that frightened poor old Bill.

“Next night we found that he had learned to curse, for he came on a lot of us asleep in our bunks, and among them poor old Bill, and he pointed at us with a finger, and made a curse that our souls should stay all night at the top of the masts. And suddenly there was the soul of poor old Bill sitting like a monkey at the top of the mast, and looking at the stars, and freezing through and through.

“We got up a little mutiny after that, but Captain comes up and points with his finger again, and this time poor old Bill and all the rest are swimming behind the ship through the cold green water, though their bodies remain on deck.

“It was the cabin-boy who found out that Captain couldn’t curse when he was drunk, though he could shoot as well at one time as another.

“After that it was only a matter of waiting, and of losing two men when the time came. Some of us were murderous fellows, and wanted to kill Captain, but poor old Bill was for finding a bit of an island, out of the track of ships, and leaving him there with his share of our year’s provisions. And everybody listened to poor old Bill, and we decided to maroon Captain as soon as we caught him when he couldn’t curse.

“It was three whole days before Captain got drunk again, and poor old Bill and all had a dreadful time, for Captain invented new curses every day, and wherever he pointed his finger our souls had to go; and the fishes got to know us, and so did the stars, and none of them pitied us when we froze on the masts or were hurried through forests of seaweed and lost our way — both stars and fishes went about their businesses with cold, unastonished eyes. Once when the sun had set and it was twilight, and the moon was showing clearer and clearer in the sky, and we stopped our work for a moment because Captain seemed to be looking away from us at the colours in the sky, he suddenly turned and sent our souls to the Moon. And it was colder there than ice at night; and there were horrible mountains making shadows; and it was all as silent as miles of tombs; and Earth was shining up in the sky as big as the blade of a scythe, and we all got homesick for it, but could not speak nor cry. It was quite dark when we got back, and we were very respectful to Captain all the next day, but he cursed several of us again very soon. What we all feared most was that he would curse our souls to Hell, and none of us mentioned Hell above a whisper for fear that it should remind him. But on the third evening the cabin-boy came and told us that Captain was drunk. And we all went to his cabin, and we found him

lying there across his bunk, and he shot as he had never shot before; but he had no more than the two pistols, and he would only have killed two men if he hadn't caught Joe over the head with the end of one of his pistols. And then we tied him up. And poor old Bill put the rum between the Captain's teeth, and kept him drunk for two days, so that he could not curse, till we found a convenient rock. And before sunset of the second day we found a nice bare island for Captain, out of the track of ships, about a hundred yards long and about eighty wide; and we rowed him along to it in a little boat, and gave him provisions for a year, the same as we had ourselves, because poor old Bill wanted to be fair. And we left him sitting comfortable with his back to a rock singing a sailor's song.

"When we could no longer hear Captain singing we all grew very cheerful and made a banquet out of our year's provisions, as we all hoped to be home again in under three weeks. We had three great banquets every day for a week — every man had more than he could eat, and what was left over we threw on the floor like gentlemen. And then one day, as we saw San Huëgédos, and wanted to sail in to spend our money, the wind changed round from behind us and beat us out to sea. There was no tacking against it, and no getting into the harbour, though other ships sailed by us and anchored there. Sometimes a dead calm would fall on us, while fishing boats all around us flew before half a gale, and sometimes the wind would beat us out to sea when nothing else was moving. All day we tried, and at night we laid to and tried again the next day. And all the sailors of the other ships were spending their money in San Huëgédos and we could not come nigh it. Then we spoke horrible things against the wind and against San Huëgédos, and sailed away.

"It was just the same at Norenna.

"We kept close together now and talked in low voices. Suddenly poor old Bill grew frightened. As we went all along the Siractic coast-line, we tried again and again, and the wind was waiting for us in every harbour and sent us out to sea. Even the little islands would not have us. And then we knew that there was no landing yet for poor old Bill, and every one upbraided his kind heart that had made them maroon Captain on a rock, so as not to have his blood upon their heads. There was nothing to do but to drift about the seas. There were no banquets now, because we feared that Captain might live his year and keep us out to sea.

“At first we used to hail all passing ships, and used to try to board them in the boats; but there was no towing against Captain’s curse, and we had to give that up. So we played cards for a year in Captain’s cabin, night and day, storm and fine, and every one promised to pay poor old Bill when we got ashore.

“It was horrible to us to think what a frugal man Captain really was, he that used to get drunk every other day whenever he was at sea, and here he was still alive, and sober too, for his curse still kept us out of every port, and our provisions were gone.

“Well, it came to drawing lots, and Jim was the unlucky one. Jim only kept us about three days, and then we drew lots again, and this time it was the nigger. The nigger didn’t keep us any longer, and we drew again, and this time it was Charlie, and still Captain was alive.

“As we got fewer one of us kept us longer. Longer and longer a mate used to last us, and we all wondered how ever Captain did it. It was five weeks over the year when we drew Mike, and he kept us for a week, and Captain was still alive. We wondered he didn’t get tired of the same old curse; but we supposed things looked different when one is alone on an island.

“When there was only Jakes and poor old Bill and the cabin-boy and Dick, we didn’t draw any longer. We said that the cabin-boy had had all the luck, and he mustn’t expect any more. Then poor old Bill was alone with Jakes and Dick, and Captain was still alive. When there was no more boy, and the Captain still alive, Dick, who was a huge strong man like poor old Bill, said that it was Jakes’ turn, and he was very lucky to have lived as long as he had. But poor old Bill talked it all over with Jakes, and they thought it better than Dick should take his turn.

“Then there was Jakes and poor old Bill; and Captain would not die.

“And these two used to watch one another night and day, when Dick was gone and no one else was left to them. And at last poor old Bill fell down in a faint and lay there for an hour. Then Jakes came up to him slowly with his knife, and makes a stab at poor old Bill as he lies there on the deck. And poor old Bill caught hold of him by the wrist, and put his knife into him twice to make quite sure, although it spoiled the best part of the meat. Then poor old Bill was all alone at sea.

“And the very next week, before the food gave out, Captain must have died on his bit of an island; for poor old Bill heard the Captain’s soul going

cursing over the sea, and the day after that the ship was cast on a rocky coast.

"And Captain's been dead now for over a hundred years, and poor old Bill is safe ashore again. But it looks as if Captain hadn't done with him yet, for poor old Bill doesn't ever get any older, and somehow or other he doesn't seem to die. Poor old Bill!"

When this was over the man's fascination suddenly snapped, and we all jumped up and left him.

It was not only his revolting story, but it was the fearful look in the eyes of the man who told it, and the terrible ease with which his voice surpassed the roar of the rain, that decided me never again to enter that haunt of sailors — the tavern of the sea.

THE BEGGARS

I was walking down Piccadilly not long ago, thinking of nursery rhymes and regretting old romance.

As I saw the shopkeepers walk by in their black frock-coats and their black hats, I thought of the old line in nursery annals: “The merchants of London, they wear scarlet.”

The streets were all so unromantic, dreary. Nothing could be done for them, I thought — nothing. And then my thoughts were interrupted by barking dogs. Every dog in the street seemed to be barking — every kind of dog, not only the little ones but the big ones too. They were all facing East towards the way I was coming by. Then I turned round to look and had this vision, in Piccadilly, on the opposite side to the houses just after you pass the cab-rank.

Tall bent men were coming down the street arrayed in marvelous cloaks. All were sallow of skin and swarthy of hair, and most of them wore strange beards. They were coming slowly, and they walked with staves, and their hands were out for alms.

All the beggars had come to town.

I would have given them a gold doubloon engraven with the towers of Castile, but I had no such coin. They did not seem the people to who it were fitting to offer the same coin as one tendered for the use of a taxicab (O marvelous, ill-made word, surely the pass-word somewhere of some evil order). Some of them wore purple cloaks with wide green borders, and the border of green was a narrow strip with some, and some wore cloaks of old and faded red, and some wore violet cloaks, and none wore black. And they begged gracefully, as gods might beg for souls.

I stood by a lamp-post, and they came up to it, and one addressed it, calling the lamp-post brother, and said, “O lamp-post, our brother of the dark, are there many wrecks by thee in the tides of night? Sleep not, brother, sleep not. There were many wrecks an it were not for thee.”

It was strange: I had not thought of the majesty of the street lamp and his long watching over drifting men. But he was not beneath the notice of these cloaked strangers.

And then one murmured to the street: “Art thou weary, street? Yet a little longer they shall go up and down, and keep thee clad with tar and wooden

bricks. Be patient, street. In a while the earthquake cometh."

"Who are you?" people said. "And where do you come from?"

"Who may tell what we are," they answered, "or whence we come?"

And one turned towards the smoke-stained houses, saying, "Blessed be the houses, because men dream therein."

Then I perceived, what I had never thought, that all these staring houses were not alike, but different one from another, because they held different dreams.

And another turned to a tree that stood by the Green Park railings, saying, "Take comfort, tree, for the fields shall come again."

And all the while the ugly smoke went upwards, the smoke that has stifled Romance and blackened the birds. This, I thought, they can neither praise nor bless. And when they saw it they raised their hands towards it, towards the thousand chimneys, saying, "Behold the smoke. The old coal-forests that have lain so long in the dark, and so long still, are dancing now and going back to the sun. Forget not Earth, O our brother, and we wish thee joy of the sun."

It had rained, and a cheerless stream dropped down a dirty gutter. It had come from heaps of refuse, foul and forgotten; it had gathered upon its way things that were derelict, and went to somber drains unknown to man or the sun. It was this sullen stream as much as all other causes that had made me say in my heart that the town was vile, that Beauty was dead in it, and Romance fled.

Even this thing they blessed. And one that wore a purple cloak with broad green border, said, "Brother, be hopeful yet, for thou shalt surely come at last to the delectable Sea, and meet the heaving, huge, and travelled ships, and rejoice by isles that know the golden sun." Even thus they blessed the gutter, and I felt no whim to mock.

And the people that went by, in their black unseemly coats and their misshapen, monstrous, shiny hats, the beggars also blessed. And one of them said to one of these dark citizens: "O twin of Night himself, with thy specks of white at wrist and neck like to Night's scattered stars. How fearfully thou dost veil with black thy hid, unguessed desires. They are deep thoughts in thee that they will not frolic with colour, that they say 'No' to purple, and to lovely green 'Begone.' Thou hast wild fancies that they must needs be tamed with black, and terrible imaginings that they must be hidden thus. Has thy soul dreams of the angels, and of the walls of faëry that thou

hast guarded it so utterly, lest it dazzle astonished eyes? Even so God hid the diamond deep down in miles of clay.

"The wonder of thee is not marred by mirth.

"Behold thou art very secret.

"Be wonderful. Be full of mystery."

Silently the man in the black frock-coat passed on. And I came to understand when the purple beggar had spoken, that the dark citizen had trafficked perhaps with Ind, that in his heart were strange and dumb ambitions; that his dumbness was founded by solemn rite on the roots of ancient tradition; that it might be overcome one day by a cheer in the street or by some one singing a song, and that when this shopman spoke there might come clefts in the world and people peering over at the abyss.

Then turning towards Green Park, where as yet Spring was not, the beggars stretched out their hands, and looking at the frozen grass and the yet unbudding trees they, chanting all together, prophesied daffodils.

A motor omnibus came down the street, nearly running over some of the dogs that were barking ferociously still. It was sounding its horn noisily.

And the vision went then.

In a letter from a friend whom I have never seen, one of those that read my books, this line was quoted— "But he, he never came to Carcassonne." I do not know the origin of the line, but I made this tale about it.

CARCASSONNE

When Camorak reigned at Arn, and the world was fairer, he gave a festival to all the weald to commemorate the splendour of his youth.

They say that his house at Arn was huge and high, and its ceiling painted blue; and when evening fell men would climb up by ladders and light the scores of candles hanging from slender chains. And they say, too, that sometimes a cloud would come, and pour in through the top of one of the oriel windows, and it would come over the edge of the stonework as the sea-mist comes over a sheer cliffs shaven lip where an old wind has blown for ever and ever (he has swept away thousands of leaves and thousands of centuries, they are all one to him, he owes no allegiance to Time). And the cloud would re-shape itself in the hall's lofty vault and drift on through it slowly, and out to the sky again through another window. And from its shape the knights in Camorak's hall would prophesy the battles and sieges of the next season of war. They say of the hall of Camorak at Arn that there hath been none like it in any land, and foretell that there will be never.

Hither had come in the folk of the Weald from sheepfold and from forest, revolving slow thoughts of food, and shelter, and love, and they sat down wondering in that famous hall; and therein also were seated the men of Arn, the town that clustered round the King's high house, and all was roofed with red, maternal earth.

If old songs may be trusted, it was a marvelous hall.

Many who sat there could only have seen it distantly before, a clear shape in the landscape, but smaller than a hill. Now they beheld along the wall the weapons of Camorak's men, of which already the lute-players made songs, and tales were told at evening in the byres. There they described the shield of Camorak that had gone to and fro across so many battles, and the sharp but dinted edges of his sword; there were the weapons of Gadriol the Leal, and Norn, and Athoric of the Sleety Sword, Heriel the Wild, Yarold, and Thanga of Esk, their arms hung evenly all round the hall, low where a man could reach them; and in the place of honour in the midst, between the arms of Camorak and of Gadriol the Leal, hung the harp of Arleon. And of all the weapons hanging on those walls none were more calamitous to Camorak's foes than was the harp of Arleon. For to a man that goes up against a strong place on foot, pleasant indeed is the twang and jolt

of some fearful engine of war that his fellow-warriors are working behind him, from which huge rocks go sighing over his head and plunge among his foes; and pleasant to a warrior in the wavering light are the swift commands of his King, and a joy to him are his comrades' instant cheers exulting suddenly at a turn of the war. All this and more was the harp to Camorak's men; for not only would it cheer his warriors on, but many a time would Arleon of the Harp strike wild amazement into opposing hosts by some rapturous prophecy suddenly shouted out while his hand swept over the roaring strings. Moreover, no war was ever declared till Camorak and his men had listened long to the harp, and were elate with the music and mad against peace. Once Arleon, for the sake of a rhyme, had made war upon Estabonn; and an evil king was overthrown, and honour and glory won; from such queer motives does good sometimes accrue.

Above the shields and the harps all round the hall were the painted figures of heroes of fabulous famous songs. Too trivial, because too easily surpassed by Camorak's men, seemed all the victories that the earth had known; neither was any trophy displayed of Camorak's seventy battles, for these were as nothing to his warriors or him compared with those things that their youth had dreamed and which they mightily purposed yet to do.

Above the painted pictures there was darkness, for evening was closing in, and the candles swinging on their slender chain were not yet lit in the roof; it was as though a piece of the night had been builded into the edifice like a huge natural rock that juts into a house. And there sat all the warriors of Arn and the Weald-folk wondering at them; and none were more than thirty, and all were skilled in war. And Camorak sat at the head of all, exulting in his youth.

We must wrestle with Time for some seven decades, and he is a weak and puny antagonist in the first three bouts.

Now there was present at this feast a diviner, one who knew the schemes of Fate, and he sat among the people of the Weald and had no place of honour, for Camorak and his men had no fear of Fate. And when the meat was eaten and the bones cast aside, the king rose up from his chair, and having drunken wine, and being in the glory of his youth and with all his knights about him, called to the diviner, saying, "Prophesy."

And the diviner rose up, stroking his grey beard, and spake guardedly—"There are certain events," he said, "upon the ways of Fate that are veiled even from a diviner's eyes, and many more are clear to us that were better

veiled from all; much I know that is better unforetold, and some things that I may not foretell on pain of centuries of punishment. But this I know and foretell — that you will never come to Carcassonne."

Instantly there was a buzz of talk telling of Carcassonne — some had heard of it in speech or song, some had read of it, and some had dreamed of it. And the king sent Arleon of the Harp down from his right hand to mingle with the Weald-folk to hear aught that any told of Carcassonne. But the warriors told of the places they had won to — many a hard-held fortress, many a far-off land, and swore that they would come to Carcassonne.

And in a while came Arleon back to the king's right hand, and raised his harp and chanted and told of Carcassonne. Far away it was, and far and far away, a city of gleaming ramparts rising one over other, and marble terraces behind the ramparts, and fountains shimmering on the terraces. To Carcassonne the elf-kings with their fairies had first retreated from men, and had built it on an evening late in May by blowing their elfin horns. Carcassonne! Carcassonne!

Travellers had seen it sometimes like a clear dream, with the sun glittering on its citadel upon a far-off hilltop, and then the clouds had come or a sudden mist; no one had seen it long or come quite close to it; though once there were some men that came very near, and the smoke from the houses blew into their faces, a sudden gust — no more, and these declared that some one was burning cedarwood there. Men had dreamed that there is a witch there, walking alone through the cold courts and corridors of marmorean palaces, fearfully beautiful and still for all her fourscore centuries, singing the second oldest song, which was taught her by the sea, shedding tears for loneliness from eyes that would madden armies, yet will she not call her dragons home — Carcassonne is terribly guarded. Sometimes she swims in a marble bath through whose deeps a river tumbles, or lies all morning on the edge of it to dry slowly in the sun, and watches the heaving river trouble the deeps of the bath. It flows through the caverns of earth for further than she knows, and coming to light in the witch's bath goes down through the earth again to its own peculiar sea.

In autumn sometimes it comes down black with snow that spring has molten in unimagined mountains, or withered blooms of mountain shrubs go beautifully by.

When there is blood in the bath she knows there is war in the mountains; and yet she knows not where those mountains are.

When she sings the fountains dance up from the dark earth, when she combs her hair they say there are storms at sea, when she is angry the wolves grow brave and all come down to the byres, when she is sad the sea is sad, and both are sad for ever. Carcassonne! Carcassonne!

This city is the fairest of the wonders of Morning; the sun shouts when he beholdeth it; for Carcassonne Evening weepeth when Evening passeth away.

And Arleon told how many goodly perils were round about the city, and how the way was unknown, and it was a knightly venture. Then all the warriors stood up and sang of the splendour of the venture. And Camorak swore by the gods that had builded Arn, and by the honour of his warriors that, alive or dead, he would come to Carcassonne.

But the diviner rose and passed out of the hall, brushing the crumbs from him with his hands and smoothing his robe as he went.

Then Camorak said, “There are many things to be planned, and counsels to be taken, and provender to be gathered. Upon what day shall we start?” And all the warriors answering shouted, “Now.” And Camorak smiled thereat, for he had but tried them. Down then from the walls they took their weapons, Sikorix, Kelleron, Aslof, Wole of the Axe; Huhenoth, Peace-breaker; Wolwuf, Father of War; Tarion, Lurth of the Warcry and many another. Little then dreamed the spiders that sat in that ringing hall of the unmolested leisure they were soon to enjoy.

When they were armed they all formed up and marched out of the hall, and Arleon strode before them singing of Carcassonne.

But the talk of the Weald arose and went back well fed to byres. They had no need of wars or of rare perils. They were ever at war with hunger. A long drought or hard winter were to them pitched battles; if the wolves entered a sheep-fold it was like the loss of a fortress, a thunder-storm on the harvest was like an ambuscade. Well-fed, they went back slowly to their byres, being at truce with hunger; and the night filled with stars.

And black against the starry sky appeared the round helms of the warriors as they passed the tops of the ridges, but in the valleys they sparkled now and then as the starlight flashed on steel.

They followed behind Arleon going south, whence rumours had always come of
Carcassonne: so they marched in the starlight, and he before them singing.

When they had marched so far that they heard no sound from Arn, and even inaudible were her swinging bells, when candles burning late far up in towers no longer sent them their disconsolate welcome; in the midst of the pleasant night that lulls the rural spaces, weariness came upon Arleon and his inspiration failed. It failed slowly. Gradually he grew less sure of the way to Carcassonne. Awhile he stopped to think, and remembered the way again; but his clear certainty was gone, and in its place were efforts in his mind to recall old prophecies and shepherd's songs that told of the marvelous city. Then as he said over carefully to himself a song that a wanderer had learnt from a goatherd's boy far up the lower slope of ultimate southern mountains, fatigue came down upon his toiling mind like snow on the winding ways of a city noisy by night, stilling all.

He stood, and the warriors closed up to him. For long they had passed by great oaks standing solitary here and there, like giants taking huge breaths of the night air before doing some furious deed; now they had come to the verge of a black forest; the tree-trunks stood like those great columns in an Egyptian hall whence God in an older mood received the praise of men; the top of it sloped the way of an ancient wind. Here they all halted and lighted a fire of branches, striking sparks from flint into a heap of bracken. They eased them of their armour, and sat round the fire, and Camorak stood up there and addressed them, and Camorak said: "We go to war with Fate, who has doomed that I shall not come to Carcassonne. And if we turn aside but one of the dooms of Fate, then the whole future of the world is ours, and the future that Fate has ordered is like the dry course of an averted river. But if such men as we, such resolute conquerors, cannot prevent one doom that Fate has planned, then is the race of man enslaved for ever to do its petty and allotted task."

Then they all drew their swords, and waved them high in the firelight, and declared war on Fate.

Nothing in the somber forest stirred or made any sound.

Tired men do not dream of war. When morning came over the gleaming fields a company that had set out from Arn discovered the discovered the camping-place of the warriors, and brought pavilions and provender. And

the warriors feasted, and the birds in the forest sang, and the inspiration of Arleon awoke.

Then they rose, and following Arleon, entered the forest, and marched away to the South. And many a woman of Arn sent her thoughts with them as they played alone some old monotonous tune, but their own thoughts were far before them, skimming over the bath through whose deeps the river tumbles in marble Carcassonne.

When butterflies were dancing on the air, and the sun neared the zenith, pavilions were pitched, and all the warriors rested; and then they feasted again, and then played knightly games, and late in the afternoon marched on once more, singing of Carcassonne.

And night came down with its mystery on the forest, and gave their demoniac look again to the trees, and rolled up out of misty hollows a huge and yellow moon.

And the men of Arn lit fires, and sudden shadows arose and leaped fantastically away. And the night-wind blew, arising like a ghost, and passed between the tree trunks, and slipped down shimmering glades, and waked the prowling beasts still dreaming of day, and drifted nocturnal birds afield to menace timorous things, and beat the roses of the befriending night, and wafted to the ears of wandering men the sound of a maiden's song, and gave a glamour to the lutanist's tune played in his loneliness on distant hills; and the deep eyes of moths glowed like a galleon's lamps, and they spread their wings and sailed their familiar sea. Upon this night-wind also the dreams of Camorak's men floated to Carcassonne.

All the next morning they marched, and all the evening, and knew they were nearing now the deeps of the forest. And the citizens of Arn kept close together and close behind the warriors. For the deeps of the forest were all unknown to travellers, but not unknown to those tales of fear that men tell at evening to their friends, in the comfort and the safety of their hearths. Then night appeared, and an enormous moon. And the men of Camorak slept. Sometimes they woke, and went to sleep again; and those that stayed awake for long and listened heard heavy two-footed creatures pad through the night on paws.

As soon as it was light the unarmed men of Arn began to slip away, and went back by bands through the forest. When darkness came they did not stop to sleep, but continued their flight straight on until they came to Arn, and added there by the tales they told to the terror of the forest.

But the warriors feasted, and afterwards Arleon rose, and played his harp, and led them on again; and a few faithful servants stayed with them still. And they marched all day through a gloom that was as old as night, but Arleon's inspiration burned in his mind like a star. And he led them till the birds began to drop into the treetops, and it was evening and they all encamped. They had only one pavilion left to them now, and near it they lit a fire, and Camorak posted a sentry with drawn sword just beyond the glow of the firelight. Some of the warriors slept in the pavilion and others round about it.

When dawn came something terrible had killed and eaten the sentry. But the splendour of the rumours of Carcassonne and Fate's decree that they should never come there, and the inspiration of Arleon and his harp, all urged the warriors on; and they marched deeper and deeper all day into the forest.

Once they saw a dragon that had caught a bear and was playing with it, letting it run a little way and overtaking it with a paw.

They came at last to a clear space in the forest just before nightfall. An odour of flowers arose from it like a mist, and every drop of dew interpreted heaven unto itself.

It was the hour when twilight kisses Earth.

It was the hour when a meaning comes into senseless things, and trees out-majesty the pomp of monarchs, and the timid creatures steal abroad to feed, and as yet the beasts of prey harmlessly dream, and Earth utters a sigh, and it is night.

In the midst of the wide clearing Camorak's warriors camped, and rejoiced to see stars again appearing one by one.

That night they ate the last of their provisions, and slept unmolested by the prowling things that haunt the gloom of the forest.

On the next day some of the warriors hunted stags, and others lay in rushes by a neighbouring lake and shot arrows at water-fowl. One stag was killed, and some geese, and several teal.

Here the adventurers stayed, breathing the pure wild air that cities know not; by day they hunted, and lit fires by night, and sang and feasted, and forgot Carcassonne. The terrible denizens of the gloom never molested them, venison was plentiful, and all manner of water-fowl: they loved the chase by day, and by night their favourite songs. Thus day after day went by, thus week after week. Time flung over this encampment a handful of

moons, the gold and silver moons that waste the year away; Autumn and Winter passed, and Spring appeared; and still the warriors hunted and feasted there.

One night of the springtide they were feasting about a fire and telling tales of the chase, and the soft moths came out of the dark and flaunted their colours in the firelight, and went out grey into the dark again; and the night wind was cool upon the warriors' necks, and the camp-fire was warm in their faces, and a silence had settled among them after some song, and Arleon all at once rose suddenly up, remembering Carcassonne. And his hand swept over the strings of his harp, awaking the deeper chords, like the sound of a nimble people dancing their steps on bronze, and the music rolled away into the night's own silence, and the voice of Arleon rose:

"When there is blood in the bath she knows there is war in the mountains and longs for the battle-shout of kingly men."

And suddenly all shouted, "Carcassonne!" And at that word their idleness was gone as a dream is gone from a dreamer waked with a shout. And soon the great march began that faltered no more nor wavered. Unchecked by battles, undaunted in lonesome spaces, ever unwearied by the vulturous years, the warriors of Camorak held on; and Arleon's inspiration led them still. They cleft with the music of Arleon's harp the gloom of ancient silences; they went singing into battles with terrible wild men, and came out singing, but with fewer voices; they came to villages in valleys full of the music of bells, or saw the lights at dusk of cottages sheltering others.

They became a proverb for wandering, and a legend arose of strange, disconsolate men. Folks spoke of them at nightfall when the fire was warm and rain slipped down the eaves; and when the wind was high small children feared the Men Who Would Not Rest were going clattering past. Strange tales were told of men in old grey armour moving at twilight along the tops of the hills and never asking shelter; and mothers told their boys who grew impatient of home that the grey wanderers were once so impatient and were now hopeless of rest, and were driven along with the rain whenever the wind was angry.

But the wanderers were cheered in their wandering by the hope of coming to Carcassonne, and later on by anger against Fate, and at last they marched on still because it seemed better to march on than to think.

For many years they had wandered and had fought with many tribes; often they gathered legends in villages and listened to idle singers singing songs; and all the rumours of Carcassonne still came from the South.

And then one day they came to a hilly land with a legend in it that only three valleys away a man might see, on clear days, Carcassonne. Tired though they were and few, and worn with the years which had all brought them wars, they pushed on instantly, led still by Arleon's inspiration which dwindled in his age, though he made music with his old harp still.

All day they climbed down into the first valley and for two days ascended, and came to the Town That May Not Be Taken In War below the top of the mountain, and its gates were shut against them, and there was no way round. To left and right steep precipices stood for as far as eye could see or legend tell of, and the pass lay through the city. Therefore Camorak drew up his remaining warriors in line of battle to wage their last war, and they stepped forward over the crisp bones of old, unburied armies.

No sentinel defied them in the gate, no arrow flew from any tower of war. One citizen climbed alone to the mountain's top, and the rest hid themselves in sheltered places.

Now, in the top of the mountain was a deep, bowl-like cavern in the rock, in which fires bubbled softly. But if any cast a boulder into the fires, as it was the custom for one of those citizens to do when enemies approached them, the mountain hurled up intermittent rocks for three days, and the rocks fell flaming all over the town and all round about it. And just as Camorak's men began to batter the gate they heard a crash on the mountain, and a great rock fell beyond them and rolled into the valley. The next two fell in front of them on the iron roofs of the town. Just as they entered the town a rock found them crowded in a narrow street, and shattered two of them. The mountain smoked and panted; with every pant a rock plunged into the streets or bounced along the heavy iron roof, and the smoke went slowly up, and up, and up.

When they had come through the long town's empty streets to the locked gate at the end, only fifteen were left. When they had broken down the gate there were only ten alive. Three more were killed as they went up the slope, and two as they passed near the terrible cavern. Fate let the rest go some way down the mountain upon the other side, and then took three of them. Camorak and Arleon alone were left alive. And night came down on the

valley to which they had come, and was lit by flashes from the fatal mountain; and the two mourned for their comrades all night long.

But when the morning came they remembered their war with Fate, and their old resolve to come to Carcassonne, and the voice of Arleon rose in a quavering song, and snatches of music from his old harp, and he stood up and marched with his face southwards as he had done for years, and behind him Camorak went. And when at last they climbed from the third valley, and stood on the hill's summit in the golden sunlight of evening, their aged eyes saw only miles of forest and the birds going to roost.

Their beards were white, and they had travelled very far and hard; it was the time with them when a man rests from labours and dreams in light sleep of the years that were and not of the years to come.

Long they looked southwards; and the sun set over remoter forests, and glow-worms lit their lamps, and the inspiration of Arleon rose and flew away for ever, to gladden, perhaps, the dreams of younger men.

And Arleon said: "My King, I know no longer the way to Carcassonne."

And Camorak smiled, as the aged smile, with little cause for mirth, and said: "The years are going by us like huge birds, whom Doom and Destiny and the schemes of God have frightened up out of some old grey marsh. And it may well be that against these no warrior may avail, and that Fate has conquered us, and that our quest has failed."

And after this they were silent.

Then they drew their swords, and side by side went down into the forest, still seeking Carcassonne.

I think they got not far; for there were deadly marshes in that forest, and gloom that outlasted the nights, and fearful beasts accustomed to its ways. Neither is there any legend, either in verse or among the songs of the people of the fields, of any having come to Carcassonne.

IN ZACCARATH

“Come,” said the King in sacred Zaccarath, “and let our prophets prophesy before us.”

A far-seen jewel of light was the holy palace, a wonder to the nomads on the plains.

There was the King with all his underlords, and the lesser kings that did him vassalage, and there were all his queens with all their jewels upon them.

Who shall tell of the splendour in which they sat; of the thousand lights and the answering emeralds; of the dangerous beauty of that hoard of queens, or the flash of their laden necks?

There was a necklace there of rose-pink pearls beyond the art of the dreamer to imagine. Who shall tell of the amethyst chandeliers, where torches, soaked in rare Bhyrinian oils, burned and gave off a scent of blethany?

(This herb marvellous, which, growing near the summit of Mount Zaumnos, scents all the Zaumnian range, and is smelt far out on the Kepuscran plains, and even, when the wind is from the mountains, in the streets of the city of Ognoth. At night it closes its petals and is heard to breathe, and its breath is a swift poison. This it does even by day if the snows are disturbed about it. No plant of this has ever been captured alive by a hunter.)

Enough to say that when the dawn came up it appeared by contrast pallid and unlovely and stripped bare of all its glory, so that it hid itself with rolling clouds.

“Come,” said the King, “let our prophets prophesy.”

Then the heralds stepped through the ranks of the King’s silk-clad warriors who lay oiled and scented upon velvet cloaks, with a pleasant breeze among them caused by the fans of slaves; even their casting-spears were set with jewels; through their ranks the heralds went with mincing steps, and came to the prophets, clad in brown and black, and one of them they brought and set him before the King. And the King looked at him and said, “Prophesy unto us.”

And the prophet lifted his head, so that his beard came clear from his brown cloak, and the fans of the slaves that fanned the warriors wafted the

tip of it a little awry. And he spake to the King, and spake thus:

"Woe unto thee, King, and woe unto Zaccarath. Woe unto thee, and woe unto thy women, for your fall shall be sore and soon. Already in Heaven the gods shun thy god: they know his doom and what is written of him: he sees oblivion before him like a mist. Thou hast aroused the hate of the mountaineers. They hate thee all along the crags of Droom. The evilness of thy days shall bring down the Zeedians on thee as the suns of springtide bring the avalanche down. They shall do unto Zaccarath as the avalanche doth unto the hamlets of the valley." When the queens chattered or tittered among themselves, he merely raised his voice and still spake on: "Woe to these walls and the carven things upon them. The hunter shall know the camping-places of the nomads by the marks of the camp-fires on the plain, but he shall not know the place of Zaccarath."

A few of the recumbent warriors turned their heads to glance at the prophet when he ceased. Far overhead the echoes of his voice hummed on awhile among the cedarn rafters.

"Is he not splendid?" said the King. And many of that assembly beat with their palms upon the polished floor in token of applause. Then the prophet was conducted back to his place at the far end of that mighty hall, and for a while musicians played on marvellous curved horns, while drums throbbed behind them hidden in a recess. The musicians were sitting crosslegged on the floor, all blowing their huge horns in the brilliant torchlight, but as the drums throbbed louder in the dark they arose and moved slowly nearer to the King. Louder and louder drummed the drums in the dark, and nearer and nearer moved the men with the horns, so that their music should not be drowned by the drums before it reached the King.

A marvellous scene it was when the tempestuous horns were halted before the King, and the drums in the dark were like the thunder of God; and the queens were nodding their heads in time to the music, with their diadems flashing like heavens of falling stars; and the warriors lifted their heads and shook, as they lifted them, the plumes of those golden birds which hunters wait for by the Liddian lakes, in a whole lifetime killing scarcely six, to make the crests that the warriors wore when they feasted in Zaccarath. Then the King shouted and the warriors sang — almost they remembered then old battle-chants. And, as they sang, the sound of the drums dwindled, and the musicians walked away backwards, and the drumming became fainter and fainter as they walked, and altogether ceased,

and they blew no more on their fantastic horns. Then the assemblage beat on the floor with their palms. And afterwards the queens besought the King to send for another prophet. And the heralds brought a singer, and placed him before the King; and the singer was a young man with a harp. And he swept the strings of it, and when there was silence he sang of the iniquity of the King. And he foretold the onrush of the Zeedians, and the fall and the forgetting of Zaccarath, and the coming again of the desert to its own, and the playing about of little lion cubs where the courts of the palace had stood.

"Of what is he singing?" said a queen to a queen.

"He is singing of everlasting Zaccarath."

As the singer ceased the assemblage beat listlessly on the floor, and the King nodded to him, and he departed.

When all the prophets had prophesied to them and all the singers sung, that royal company arose and went to other chambers, leaving the hall of festival to the pale and lonely dawn. And alone were left the lion-headed gods that were carven out of the walls; silent they stood, and their rocky arms were folded. And shadows over their faces moved like curious thoughts as the torches flickered and the dull dawn crossed the fields. And the colours began to change in the chandeliers.

When the last lutanist fell asleep the birds began to sing.

Never was greater splendour or a more famous hall. When the queens went away through the curtained door with all their diadems, it was as though the stars should arise in their stations and troop together to the West at sunrise.

And only the other day I found a stone that had undoubtedly been a part of Zaccarath, it was three inches long and an inch broad; I saw the edge of it uncovered by the sand. I believe that only three other pieces have been found like it.

THE FIELD

When one has seen Spring's blossom fall in London, and Summer appear and ripen and decay, as it does early in cities, and one is in London still, then, at some moment or another, the country places lift their flowery heads and call to one with an urgent, masterful clearness, upland behind upland in the twilight like to some heavenly choir arising rank on rank to call a drunkard from his gambling-hell. No volume of traffic can drown the sound of it, no lure of London can weaken its appeal. Having heard it one's fancy is gone, and evermore departed, to some coloured pebble agleam in a rural brook, and all that London can offer is swept from one's mind like some suddenly smitten metropolitan Goliath.

The call is from afar both in leagues and years, for the hills that call one are the hills that were, and their voices are the voices of long ago, when the elf-kings still had horns.

I see them now, those hills of my infancy (for it is they that call), with their faces upturned to the purple twilight, and the faint diaphanous figures of the fairies peering out from under the bracken to see if evening is come. I do not see upon their regal summits those desirable mansions, and highly desirable residences, which have lately been built for gentlemen who would exchange customers for tenants.

When the hills called I used to go to them by road, riding a bicycle. If you go by train you miss the gradual approach, you do not cast off London like an old forgiven sin, nor pass by little villages on the way that must have some rumour of the hills; nor, wondering if they are still the same, come at last upon the edge of their far-spread robes, and so on to their feet, and see far off their holy, welcoming faces. In the train you see them suddenly round a curve, and there they all are sitting in the sun.

I imagine that as one penetrated out from some enormous forest of the tropics, the wild beasts would become fewer, the gloom would lighten, and the horror of the place would slowly lift. Yet as one emerges nearer to the edge of London, and nearer to the beautiful influence of the hills, the houses become uglier, the streets viler, the gloom deepens, the errors of civilisation stand bare to the scorn of the fields.

Where ugliness reaches the height of its luxuriance, in the dense misery of the place, where one imagines the builder saying, "Here I culminate. Let

us give thanks to Satan," there is a bridge of yellow brick, and through it, as through some gate of filigree silver opening on fairyland, one passes into the country.

To left and right, as far as one can see, stretches that monstrous city; before one are the fields like an old, old song.

There is a field there that is full of king-cups. A stream runs through it, and along the stream is a little wood of osiers. There I used often to rest at the streams edge before my long journey to the hills.

There I used to forget London, street by street. Sometimes I picked a bunch of king-cups to show them to the hills.

I often came there. At first I noticed nothing about the field except its beauty and its peacefulness.

But the second time that I came I thought there was something ominous about the field.

Down there among the king-cups by the little shallow stream I felt that something terrible might happen in just such a place.

I did not stay long there, because I thought that too much time spent in London had brought on these morbid fancies and I went on to the hills as fast as I could.

I stayed for some days in the country air, and when I came back I went to the field again to enjoy that peaceful spot before entering London. But there was still something ominous among the osiers.

A year elapsed before I went there again. I emerged from the shadow of London into the gleaming sun; the bright green grass and the king-cups were flaming in the light, and the little stream was singing a happy song. But the moment I stepped into the field my old uneasiness returned, and worse than before. It was as though the shadow was brooding there of some dreadful future thing and a year had brought it nearer.

I reasoned that the exertion of bicycling might be bad for one, and that the moment one rested this uneasiness might result.

A little later I came back past the field by night, and the song of the stream in the hush attracted me down to it. And there the fancy came to me that it would be a terribly cold place to be in the starlight, if for some reason one was hurt and could not get away.

I knew a man who was minutely acquainted with the past history of that locality, and him I asked if anything historical had ever happened in that field. When he pressed me for my reason in asking him this, I said that the

field had seemed to me such a good place to hold a pageant in. But he said that nothing of any interest had ever occurred there, nothing at all.

So it was from the future that the field's terrible trouble came.

For three years off and on I made visits to the field, and every time more clearly it boded evil things, and my uneasiness grew more acute every time that I was lured to go and rest among the cool green grass under the beautiful osiers. Once to distract my thoughts I tried to gauge how fast the stream was trickling, but I found myself wondering if it flowed faster than blood.

I felt that it would be a terrible place to go mad in, one would hear voices.

At last I went to a poet whom I knew, and woke him from huge dreams, and put before him the whole case of the field. He had not been out of London all that year, and he promised to come with me and look at the field, and tell me what was going to happen there. It was late in July when we went. The pavement, the air, the houses and the dirt had been all baked dry by the summer, the weary traffic dragged on, and on, and on, and Sleep spreading her wings soared up and floated from London and went to walk beautifully in rural places.

When the poet saw the field he was delighted, the flowers were out in masses all along the stream, he went down to the little wood rejoicing. By the side of the stream he stood and seemed very sad. Once or twice he looked up and down it mournfully, then he bent and looked at the king-cups, first one and then another, very closely, and shaking his head.

For a long while he stood in silence, and all my old uneasiness returned, and my bodings for the future.

And then I said, "What manner of field is it?"

And he shook his head sorrowfully.

"It is a battlefield," he said.

THE DAY OF THE POLL

In the town by the sea it was the day of the poll, and the poet regarded it sadly when he woke and saw the light of it coming in at his window between two small curtains of gauze. And the day of the poll was beautifully bright; stray bird-songs came to the poet at the window; the air was crisp and wintry, but it was the blaze of sunlight that had deceived the birds. He heard the sound of the sea that the moon led up the shore, dragging the months away over the pebbles and shingles and piling them up with the years where the worn-out centuries lay; he saw the majestic downs stand facing mightily south-wards; saw the smoke of the town float up to their heavenly faces — column after column rose calmly into the morning as house by house was waked by peering shafts of the sunlight and lit its fires for the day; column by column went up toward the serene downs' faces, and failed before they came there and hung all white over houses; and every one in the town was raving mad.

It was a strange thing that the poet did, for he hired the largest motor in the town and covered it with all the flags he could find, and set out to save an intelligence. And he presently found a man whose face was hot, who shouted that the time was not far distant when a candidate, whom he named, would be returned at the head of the poll by a thumping majority. And by him the poet stopped and offered him a seat in the motor that was covered with flags. When the man saw the flags that were on the motor, and that it was the largest in the town, he got in. He said that his vote should be given for that fiscal system that had made us what we are, in order that the poor man's food should not be taxed to make the rich man richer. Or else it was that he would give his vote for that system of tariff reform which should unite us closer to our colonies with ties that should long endure, and give employment to all. But it was not to the polling-booth that the motor went, it passed it and left the town and came by a small white winding road to the very top of the downs. There the poet dismissed the car and let that wondering voter on to the grass and seated himself on a rug. And for long the voter talked of those imperial traditions that our forefathers had made for us and which he should uphold with his vote, or else it was of a people oppressed by a feudal system that was out of date and effete, and that should be ended or mended. But the poet pointed out to him small, distant,

wandering ships on the sunlit strip of sea, and the birds far down below them, and the houses below the birds, with the little columns of smoke that could not find the downs.

And at first the voter cried for his polling-booth like a child; but after a while he grew calmer, save when faint bursts of cheering came twittering up to the downs, when the voter would cry out bitterly against the misgovernment of the Radical party, or else it was — I forget what the poet told me — he extolled its splendid record.

"See," said the poet, "these ancient beautiful things, the downs and the old-time houses and the morning, and the grey sea in the sunlight going mumbling round the world. And this is the place they have chosen to go man in!"

And standing there with all broad England behind him, rolling northward, down after down, and before him the glittering sea too far for the sound of the roar of it, there seemed to the voter to grow less important the questions that troubled the town. Yet he was still angry.

"Why did you bring me here?" he said again.

"Because I grew lonely," said the poet, "when all the town went mad."

Then he pointed out to the voter some old bent thorns, and showed him the way that a wind had blown for a million years, coming up at dawn from the sea; and he told him of the storms that visit the ships, and their names and whence they come, and the currents they drive afield, and the way that the swallows go. And he spoke of the down where they sat, when the summer came, and the flowers that were not yet, and the different butterflies, and about the bats and the swifts, and the thoughts in the heart of man. He spoke of the aged windmill that stood on the down, and of how to children it seemed a strange old man who was only dead by day. And as he spoke, and as the sea-wind blew on that high and lonely place, there began to slip away from the voter's mind meaningless phrases that had crowded it long — thumping majority — victory in the fight — terminological inexactitudes — and the smell of paraffin lamps dangling in heated schoolrooms, and quotations taken from ancient speeches because the words were long. They fell away, though slowly, and slowly the voter saw a wider world and the wonder of the sea. And the afternoon wore on, and the winter evening came, and the night fell, and all black grew the sea, and about the time that the stars come blinking out to look upon our littleness, the polling-booth closed in the town.

When they got back the turmoil was on the wane in the streets; night hid the glare of the posters; and the tide, finding the noise abated and being at the flow, told an old tale that he had learned in his youth about the deeps of the sea, the same which he had told to coastwise ships that brought it to Babylon by the way of Euphrates before the doom of Troy.

I blame my friend the poet, however lonely he was, for preventing this man from registering his vote (the duty of every citizen); but perhaps it matters less, as it was a foregone conclusion, because the losing candidate, either through poverty or sheer madness, had neglected to subscribe to a single football club.

THE UNHAPPY BODY

“Why do you not dance with us and rejoice with us?” they said to a certain body. And then that body made the confession of its trouble. It said: “I am united with a fierce and violent soul, that is altogether tyrannous and will not let me rest, and he drags me away from the dances of my kin to make me toil at his detestable work; and he will not let me do the little things, that would give pleasure to the folk I love, but only cares to please posterity when he has done with me and left me to the worms; and all the while he makes absurd demands of affection from those that are near to me, and is too proud even to notice any less than he demands, so that those that should be kind to me all hate me.” And the unhappy body burst into tears.

And they said: “No sensible body cares for its soul. A soul is a little thing, and should not rule a body. You should drink and smoke more till he ceases to trouble you.” But the body only wept, and said, “Mine is a fearful soul. I have driven him away for a little while with drink. But he will soon come back. Oh, he will soon come back!”

And the body went to bed hoping to rest, for it was drowsy with drink. But just as sleep was near it, it looked up, and there was its soul sitting on the windowsill, a misty blaze of light, and looking into the river.

“Come,” said the tyrannous soul, “and look into the street.”

“I have need of sleep,” said the body.

“But the street is a beautiful thing,” the soul said vehemently; “a hundred of the people are dreaming there.”

“I am ill through want of rest,” the body said.

“That does not matter,” the soul said to it. “There are millions like you in the earth, and millions more to go there. The people’s dreams are wandering afield; they pass the seas and mountains of faëry, threading the intricate passes led by their souls; they come to golden temples a-ring with a thousand bells; they pass up steep streets lit by paper lanterns, where the doors are green and small; they know their way to witches’ chambers and castles of enchantment; they know the spell that brings them to the causeway along the ivory mountains — on one side looking downward they behold the fields of their youth and on the other lie the radiant plains of the future. Arise and write down what the people dream.”

“What reward is there for me,” said the body, “if I write down what you bid me?”

“There is no reward,” said the soul.

“Then I shall sleep,” said the body.

And the soul began to hum an idle song sung by a young man in a fabulous land as he passed a golden city (where fiery sentinels stood), and knew that his wife was within it, though as yet but a little child, and knew by prophecy that furious wars, not yet arisen in far and unknown mountains, should roll above him with their dust and thirst before he ever came to that city again — the young man sang it as he passed the gate, and was now dead with his wife a thousand years.

“I cannot sleep for that abominable song,” the body cried to the soul.

“Then do as you are commanded,” the soul replied. And wearily the body took a pen again. Then the soul spoke merrily as he looked through the window. “There is a mountain lifting sheer above London, part crystal and part myst. Thither the dreamers go when the sound of the traffic has fallen. At first they scarcely dream because of the roar of it, but before midnight it stops, and turns, and ebbs with all its wrecks. Then the dreamers arise and scale the shimmering mountain, and at its summit find the galleons of dream. Thence some sail East, some West, some into the Past and some into the Future, for the galleons sail over the years as well as over the spaces, but mostly they head for the Past and the olden harbours, for thither the sighs of men are mostly turned, and the dream-ships go before them, as the merchantmen before the continual trade-winds go down the African coast. I see the galleons even now raise anchor after anchor; the stars flash by them; they slip out of the night; their prows go gleaming into the twilight of memory, and night soon lies far off, a black cloud hanging low, and faintly spangled with stars, like the harbour and shore of some low-lying land seen afar with its harbour lights.”

Dream after dream that soul related as he sat there by the window. He told of tropical forests seen by unhappy men who could not escape from London, and never would — forests made suddenly wondrous by the song of some passing bird flying to unknown eyries and singing an unknown song. He saw the old men lightly dancing to the tune of elfin pipes — beautiful dances with fantastic maidens — all night on moonlit imaginary mountains; he heard far off the music of glittering Springs; he saw the fairness of blossoms of apple and may thirty years fallen; he heard old

voices — old tears came glistening back; Romance sat cloaked and crowned upon southern hills, and the soul knew him.

One by one he told the dreams of all that slept in that street. Sometimes he stopped to revile the body because it worked badly and slowly. Its chill fingers wrote as fast as they could, but the soul cared not for that. And so the night wore on till the soul heard tinkling in Oriental skies far footfalls of the morning.

"See now," said the soul, "the dawn that the dreamers dread. The sails of light are paling on those unwreckable galleons; the mariners that steer them slip back into fable and myth; that other sea the traffic is turning now at its ebb, and is about to hide its pallid wrecks, and to come swinging back, with its tumult, at the flow. Already the sunlight flashes in the gulfs behind the east of the world; the gods have seen it from their palace of twilight that the built above the sunrise; they warm their hands at its glow as it streams through their gleaming arches, before it reaches the world; all the gods are there that have ever been, and all the gods that shall be; they sit there in the morning, chanting and praising Man."

"I am numb and very cold for want of sleep," said the body.

"You shall have centuries of sleep," said the soul, "but you must not sleep now, for I have seen deep meadows with purple flowers flaming tall and strange above the brilliant grass, and herds of pure white unicorns that gambol there for joy, and a river running by with a glittering galleon on it, all of gold, that goes from an unknown inland to an unknown isle of the sea to take a song from the King of Over-the-Hills to the Queen of Far-Away.

"I will sing that song to you, and you shall write it down."

"I have toiled for you for years," the body said. "Give me now but one night's rest, for I am exceeding weary."

"Oh, go and rest. I am tired of you. I am off," said the soul.

And he arose and went, we know not whither. But the body they laid in the earth. And the next night at midnight the wraiths of the dead came drifting from their tombs to felicitate that body.

"You are free here, you know," they said to their new companion.

"Now I can rest," said the body.

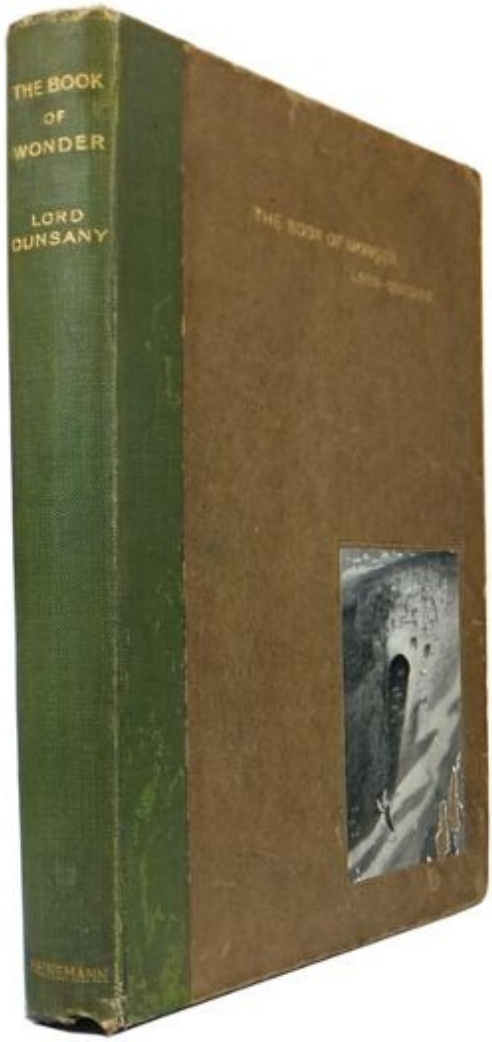
FINIS

THE BOOK OF WONDER



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PREFACE

Come with me, ladies and gentlemen who are in any wise weary of London: come with me: and those that tire at all of the world we know: for we have new worlds here.

THE BRIDE OF THE MAN-HORSE

In the morning of his two hundred and fiftieth year Shepperalk the centaur went to the golden coffer, wherein the treasure of the centaurs was, and taking from it the hoarded amulet that his father, Jyshak, in the years of his prime, had hammered from mountain gold and set with opals bartered from the gnomes, he put it upon his wrist, and said no word, but walked from his mother's cavern. And he took with him too that clarion of the centaurs, that famous silver horn, that in its time had summoned to surrender seventeen cities of Man, and for twenty years had brayed at star-girt walls in the Siege of Tholdenblarna, the citadel of the gods, what time the centaurs waged their fabulous war and were not broken by any force of arms, but retreated slowly in a cloud of dust before the final miracle of the gods that They brought in Their desperate need from Their ultimate armoury. He took it and strode away, and his mother only sighed and let him go.

She knew that today he would not drink at the stream coming down from the terraces of Varpa Niger, the inner land of the mountains, that today he would not wonder awhile at the sunset and afterwards trot back to the cavern again to sleep on rushes pulled by rivers that know not Man. She knew that it was with him as it had been of old with his father, and with Goom the father of Jyshak, and long ago with the gods. Therefore she only sighed and let him go.

But he, coming out from the cavern that was his home, went for the first time over the little stream, and going round the corner of the crags saw glittering beneath him the mundane plain. And the wind of the autumn that was gilding the world, rushing up the slopes of the mountain, beat cold on his naked flanks. He raised his head and snorted.

"I am a man-horse now!" he shouted aloud; and leaping from crag to crag he galloped by valley and chasm, by torrent-bed and scar of avalanche, until he came to the wandering leagues of the plain, and left behind him for ever the Athraminaurian mountains.

His goal was Zretazoola, the city of Sombelenë. What legend of Sombelenë's inhuman beauty or of the wonder of her mystery had ever floated over the mundane plain to the fabulous cradle of the centaurs' race, the Athraminaurian mountains, I do not know. Yet in the blood of man there is a tide, an old sea-current rather, that is somehow akin to the twilight,

which brings him rumours of beauty from however far away, as driftwood is found at sea from islands not yet discovered: and this spring-tide of current that visits the blood of man comes from the fabulous quarter of his lineage, from the legendary, the old; it takes him out to the woodlands, out to the hills; he listens to ancient song. So it may be that Shepperalk's fabulous blood stirred in those lonely mountains away at the edge of the world to rumours that only the airy twilight knew and only confided secretly to the bat, for Shepperalk was more legendary even than man. Certain it was that he headed from the first for the city of Zretazoola, where Sombelenë in her temple dwelt; though all the mundane plain, its rivers and mountains, lay between Shepperalk's home and the city he sought.

When first the feet of the centaur touched the grass of that soft alluvial earth he blew for joy upon the silver horn, he pranced and caracoled, he gambolled over the leagues; pace came to him like a maiden with a lamp, a new and beautiful wonder; the wind laughed as it passed him. He put his head down low to the scent of the flowers, he lifted it up to be nearer the unseen stars, he revelled through kingdoms, took rivers in his stride; how shall I tell you, ye that dwell in cities, how shall I tell you what he felt as he galloped? He felt for strength like the towers of Bel-Narana; for lightness like those gossamer palaces that the fairy-spider builds 'twixt heaven and sea along the coasts of Zith; for swiftness like some bird racing up from the morning to sing in some city's spires before daylight comes. He was the sworn companion of the wind. For joy he was as a song; the lightnings of his legendary sires, the earlier gods, began to mix with his blood; his hooves thundered. He came to the cities of men, and all men trembled, for they remembered the ancient mythical wars, and now they dreaded new battles and feared for the race of man. Not by Clio are these wars recorded; history does not know them, but what of that? Not all of us have sat at historians' feet, but all have learned fable and myth at their mothers' knees. And there were none that did not fear strange wars when they saw Shepperalk swerve and leap along the public ways. So he passed from city to city.

By night he lay down unpanting in the reeds of some marsh or a forest; before dawn he rose triumphant, and hugely drank of some river in the dark, and splashing out of it would trot to some high place to find the sunrise, and to send echoing eastwards the exultant greetings of his jubilant horn. And lo! the sunrise coming up from the echoes, and the plains new-lit by the day,

and the leagues spinning by like water flung from a top, and that gay companion, the loudly laughing wind, and men and the fears of men and their little cities; and, after that, great rivers and waste spaces and huge new hills, and then new lands beyond them, and more cities of men, and always the old companion, the glorious wind. Kingdom by kingdom slipt by, and still his breath was even. “It is a golden thing to gallop on good turf in one’s youth,” said the young man-horse, the centaur. “Ha, ha,” said the wind of the hills, and the winds of the plain answered.

Bells pealed in frantic towers, wise men consulted parchments, astrologers sought of the portent from the stars, the aged made subtle prophecies. “Is he not swift?” said the young. “How glad he is,” said children.

Night after night brought him sleep, and day after day lit his gallop, till he came to the lands of the Athalonian men who live by the edges of the mundane plain, and from them he came to the lands of legend again such as those in which he was cradled on the other side of the world, and which fringe the marge of the world and mix with the twilight. And there a mighty thought came into his untired heart, for he knew that he neared Zretazoola now, the city of Sombelenë.

It was late in the day when he neared it, and clouds coloured with evening rolled low on the plain before him; he galloped on into their golden mist, and when it hid from his eyes the sight of things, the dreams in his heart awoke and romantically he pondered all those rumours that used to come to him from Sombelenë, because of the fellowship of fabulous things. She dwelt (said evening secretly to the bat) in a little temple by a lone lakeshore. A grove of cypresses screened her from the city, from Zretazoola of the climbing ways. And opposite her temple stood her tomb, her sad lake-sepulchre with open door, lest her amazing beauty and the centuries of her youth should ever give rise to the heresy among men that lovely Sombelenë was immortal: for only her beauty and her lineage were divine.

Her father had been half centaur and half god; her mother was the child of a desert lion and that sphinx that watches the pyramids; — she was more mystical than Woman.

Her beauty was as a dream, was as a song; the one dream of a lifetime dreamed on enchanted dews, the one song sung to some city by a deathless bird blown far from his native coasts by storm in Paradise. Dawn after dawn on mountains of romance or twilight after twilight could never equal her

beauty; all the glow-worms had not the secret among them nor all the stars of night; poets had never sung it nor evening guessed its meaning; the morning envied it, it was hidden from lovers.

She was unwed, unwooed.

The lions came not to woo her because they feared her strength, and the gods dared not love her because they knew she must die.

This was what evening had whispered to the bat, this was the dream in the heart of Shepperalk as he cantered blind through the mist. And suddenly there at his hooves in the dark of the plain appeared the cleft in the legendary lands, and Zretazoola sheltering in the cleft, and sunning herself in the evening.

Swiftly and craftily he bounded down by the upper end of the cleft, and entering Zretazoola by the outer gate which looks out sheer on the stars, he galloped suddenly down the narrow streets. Many that rushed out on to balconies as he went clattering by, many that put their heads from glittering windows, are told of in olden song. Shepperalk did not tarry to give greetings or to answer challenges from martial towers, he was down through the earthward gateway like the thunderbolt of his sires, and, like Leviathan who has leapt at an eagle, he surged into the water between temple and tomb.

He galloped with half-shut eyes up the temple-steps, and, only seeing dimly through his lashes, seized Sombelenë by the hair, undazzled as yet by her beauty, and so haled her away; and, leaping with her over the floorless chasm where the waters of the lake fall unremembered away into a hole in the world, took her we know not where, to be her slave for all centuries that are allowed to his race.

Three blasts he gave as he went upon that silver horn that is the world-old treasure of the centaurs. These were his wedding bells.

DISTRESSING TALE OF THANGOBRIND THE JEWELLER

When Thangobrind the jeweller heard the ominous cough, he turned at once upon that narrow way. A thief was he, of very high repute, being patronized by the lofty and elect, for he stole nothing smaller than the Moomoo's egg, and in all his life stole only four kinds of stone — the ruby, the diamond, the emerald, and the sapphire; and, as jewellers go, his honesty was great. Now there was a Merchant Prince who had come to Thangobrind and had offered his daughter's soul for the diamond that is larger than the human head and was to be found on the lap of the spider-idol, Hlo-hlo, in his temple of Moung-ga-ling; for he had heard that Thangobrind was a thief to be trusted.

Thangobrind oiled his body and slipped out of his shop, and went secretly through byways, and got as far as Snarp, before anybody knew that he was out on business again or missed his sword from its place under the counter. Thence he moved only by night, hiding by day and rubbing the edges of his sword, which he called Mouse because it was swift and nimble. The jeweller had subtle methods of travelling; nobody saw him cross the plains of Zid; nobody saw him come to Mursk or Tlun. O, but he loved shadows! Once the moon peeping out unexpectedly from a tempest had betrayed an ordinary jeweller; not so did it undo Thangobrind: the watchman only saw a crouching shape that snarled and laughed: "'Tis but a hyena," they said. Once in the city of Ag one of the guardians seized him, but Thangobrind was oiled and slipped from his hand; you scarcely heard his bare feet patter away. He knew that the Merchant Prince awaited his return, his little eyes open all night and glittering with greed; he knew how his daughter lay chained up and screaming night and day. Ah, Thangobrind knew. And had he not been out on business he had almost allowed himself one or two little laughs. But business was business, and the diamond that he sought still lay on the lap of Hlo-hlo, where it had been for the last two million years since Hlo-hlo created the world and gave unto it all things except that precious stone called Dead Man's Diamond. The jewel was often stolen, but it had a knack of coming back again to the lap of Hlo-hlo. Thangobrind knew this, but he was no common jeweller and hoped to outwit Hlo-hlo, perceiving not the trend of ambition and lust and that they are vanity.

How nimbly he threaded his way through he pits of Snood! — now like a botanist, scrutinising the ground; now like a dancer, leaping from crumbling edges. It was quite dark when he went by the towers of Tor, where archers shoot ivory arrows at strangers lest any foreigner should alter their laws, which are bad, but not to be altered by mere aliens. At night they shoot by the sound of the strangers' feet. O, Thangobrind, Thangobrind, was ever a jeweller like you! He dragged two stones behind him by long cords, and at these the archers shot. Tempting indeed was the snare that they set in Woth, the emeralds loose-set in the city's gate; but Thangobrind discerned the golden cord that climbed the wall from each and the weights that would topple upon him if he touched one, and so he left them, though he left them weeping, and at last came to Theth. There all men worship Hlo-hlo; though they are willing to believe in other gods, as missionaries attest, but only as creatures of the chase for the hunting of Hlo-hlo, who wears Their halos, so these people say, on golden hooks along his hunting-belt. And from Theth he came to the city of Moung and the temple of Moung-ga-ling, and entered and saw the spider-idol, Hlo-hlo, sitting there with Dead Man's Diamond glittering on his lap, and looking for all the world like a full moon, but a full moon seen by a lunatic who had slept too long in its rays, for there was in Dead Man's Diamond a certain sinister look and a boding of things to happen that are better not mentioned here. The face of the spider-idol was lit by that fatal gem; there was no other light. In spite of his shocking limbs and that demoniac body, his face was serene and apparently unconscious.

A little fear came into the mind of Thangobrind the jeweller, a passing tremor — no more; business was business and he hoped for the best. Thangobrind offered honey to Hlo-hlo and prostrated himself before him. Oh, he was cunning! When the priests stole out of the darkness to lap up the honey they were stretched senseless on the temple floor, for there was a drug in the honey that was offered to Hlo-hlo. And Thangobrind the jeweller picked Dead Man's Diamond up and put it on his shoulder and trudged away from the shrine; and Hlo-hlo the spider-idol said nothing at all, but he laughed softly as the jeweller shut the door. When the priests awoke out of the grip of the drug that was offered with the honey to Hlo-hlo, they rushed to a little secret room with an outlet on the stars and cast a horoscope of the thief. Something that they saw in the horoscope seemed to satisfy the priests.

It was not like Thangobrind to go back by the road by which he had come. No, he went by another road, even though it led to the narrow way, night-house and spider-forest.

The city of Moung went towering by behind him, balcony above balcony, eclipsing half the stars, as he trudged away with his diamond. Though when a soft pittering as of velvet feet arose behind him he refused to acknowledge that it might be what he feared, yet the instincts of his trade told him that it is not well when any noise whatever follows a diamond by night, and this was one of the largest that had ever come to him in the way of business. When he came to the narrow way that leads to spider-forest, Dead Man's Diamond feeling cold and heavy, and the velvety footfall seeming fearfully close, the jeweller stopped and almost hesitated. He looked behind him; there was nothing there. He listened attentively; there was no sound now. Then he thought of the screams of the Merchant Prince's daughter, whose soul was the diamond's price, and smiled and went stoutly on. There watched him, apathetically, over the narrow way, that grim and dubious woman whose house is the Night. Thangobrind, hearing no longer the sound of suspicious feet, felt easier now. He was all but come to the end of the narrow way, when the woman listlessly uttered that ominous cough.

The cough was too full of meaning to be disregarded. Thangobrind turned round and saw at once what he feared. The spider-idol had not stayed at home. The jeweller put his diamond gently upon the ground and drew his sword called Mouse. And then began that famous fight upon the narrow way in which the grim old woman whose house was Night seemed to take so little interest. To the spider-idol you saw at once it was all a horrible joke. To the jeweller it was grim earnest. He fought and panted and was pushed back slowly along the narrow way, but he wounded Hlo-hlo all the while with terrible long gashes all over his deep, soft body till Mouse was slimy with blood. But at last the persistent laughter of Hlo-hlo was too much for the jeweller's nerves, and, once more wounding his demoniac foe, he sank aghast and exhausted by the door of the house called Night at the feet of the grim old woman, who having uttered once that ominous cough interfered no further with the course of events. And there carried Thangobrind the jeweller away those whose duty it was, to the house where the two men hang, and taking down from his hook the left-hand one of the two, they put that venturous jeweller in his place; so that there fell on him

the doom that he feared, as all men know though it is so long since, and there abated somewhat the ire of the envious gods.

And the only daughter of the Merchant Prince felt so little gratitude for this great deliverance that she took to respectability of a militant kind, and became aggressively dull, and called her home the English Riviera, and had platitudes worked in worsted upon her tea-cosy, and in the end never died, but passed away at her residence.

THE HOUSE OF THE SPHINX

When I came to the House of the Sphinx it was already dark. They made me eagerly welcome. And I, in spite of the deed, was glad of any shelter from that ominous wood. I saw at once that there had been a deed, although a cloak did all that a cloak may do to conceal it. The mere uneasiness of the welcome made me suspect that cloak.

The Sphinx was moody and silent. I had not come to pry into the secrets of Eternity nor to investigate the Sphinx's private life, and so had little to say and few questions to ask; but to whatever I did say she remained morosely indifferent. It was clear that either she suspected me of being in search of the secrets of one of her gods, or of being boldly inquisitive about her traffic with Time, or else she was darkly absorbed with brooding upon the deed.

I saw soon enough that there was another than me to welcome; I saw it from the hurried way that they glanced from the door to the deed and back to the door again. And it was clear that the welcome was to be a bolted door. But such bolts, and such a door! Rust and decay and fungus had been there far too long, and it was not a barrier any longer that would keep out even a determined wolf. And it seemed to be something worse than a wolf that they feared.

A little later on I gathered from what they said that some imperious and ghastly thing was looking for the Sphinx, and that something that had happened had made its arrival certain. It appeared that they had slapped the Sphinx to vex her out of her apathy in order that she should pray to one of her gods, whom she had littered in the house of Time; but her moody silence was invincible, and her apathy Oriental, ever since the deed had happened. And when they found that they could not make her pray, there was nothing for them to do but to pay little useless attentions to the rusty lock of the door, and to look at the deed and wonder, and even pretend to hope, and to say that after all it might not bring that destined thing from the forest, which no one named.

It may be said I had chosen a gruesome house, but not if I had described the forest from which I came, and I was in need of any spot wherein I could rest my mind from the thought of it.

I wondered very much what thing would come from the forest on account of the deed; and having seen that forest — as you, gentle reader, have not — I had the advantage of knowing that anything might come. It was useless to ask the Sphinx — she seldom reveals things, like her paramour Time (the gods take after her), and while this mood was on her, rebuff was certain. So I quietly began to oil the lock of the door. And as soon as they saw this simple act I won their confidence. It was not that my work was of any use — it should have been done long before; but they saw that my interest was given for the moment to the thing that they thought vital. They clustered round me then. They asked me what I thought of the door, and whether I had seen better, and whether I had seen worse; and I told them about all the doors I knew, and said that the doors of the baptistry in Florence were better doors, and the doors made by a certain firm of builders in London were worse. And then I asked them what it was that was coming after the Sphinx because of the deed. And at first they would not say, and I stopped oiling the door; and then they said that it was the arch-inquisitor of the forest, who is investigator and avenger of all silverstrian things; and from all that they said about him it seemed to me that this person was quite white, and was a kind of madness that would settle down quite blankly upon a place, a kind of mist in which reason could not live; and it was the fear of this that made them fumble nervously at the lock of that rotten door; but with the Sphinx it was not so much fear as sheer prophecy.

The hope that they tried to hope was well enough in its way, but I did not share it; it was clear that the thing that they feared was the corollary of the deed — one saw that more by the resignation upon the face of the Sphinx than by their sorry anxiety for the door.

The wind soughed, and the great tapers flared, and their obvious fear and the silence of the Sphinx grew more than ever a part of the atmosphere, and bats went restlessly through the gloom of the wind that beat the tapers low.

Then a few things screamed far off, then a little nearer, and something was coming towards us, laughing hideously. I hastily gave a prod to the door that they guarded; my finger sank right into the mouldering wood — there was not a chance of holding it. I had not leisure to observe their fright; I thought of the back-door, for the forest was better than this; only the Sphinx was absolutely calm, her prophecy was made and she seemed to have seen her doom, so that no new thing could perturb her.

But by mouldering rungs of ladders as old as Man, by slippery edges of the dreaded abyss, with an ominous dizziness about my heart and a feeling of horror in the soles of my feet, I clambered from tower to tower till I found the door that I sought; and it opened on to one of the upper branches of a huge and sombre pine, down which I climbed on to the floor of the forest. And I was glad to be back again in the forest from which I had fled.

And the Sphinx in her menaced house — I know not how she fared — whether she gazes for ever, disconsolate, at the deed, remembering only in her smitten mind, at which the little boys now leer, that she once knew well those things at which man stands aghast; or whether in the end she crept away, and clambering horribly from abyss to abyss, came at last to higher things, and is wise and eternal still. For who knows of madness whether it is divine or whether it be of the pit?

PROBABLE ADVENTURE OF THE THREE LITERARY MEN

When the nomads came to El Lola they had no more songs, and the question of stealing the golden box arose in all its magnitude. On the one hand, many had sought the golden box, the receptacle (as the Aethiopians know) of poems of fabulous value; and their doom is still the common talk of Arabia. On the other hand, it was lonely to sit around the camp-fire by night with no new songs.

It was the tribe of Heth that discussed these things one evening upon the plains below the peak of Mluna. Their native land was the track across the world of immemorial wanderers; and there was trouble among the elders of the nomads because there were no new songs; while, untouched by human trouble, untouched as yet by the night that was hiding the plains away, the peak of Mluna, calm in the after-glow, looked on the Dubious Land. And it was there on the plain upon the known side of Mluna, just as the evening star came mouse-like into view and the flames of the camp-fire lifted their lonely plumes uncheered by any song, that that rash scheme was hastily planned by the nomads which the world has named The Quest of the Golden Box.

No measure of wiser precaution could the elders of the nomads have taken than to choose for their thief that very Slith, that identical thief that (even as I write) in how many school-rooms governesses teach stole a march on the King of Westalia. Yet the weight of the box was such that others had to accompany him, and Sippy and Slorg were no more agile thieves than may be found today among vendors of the antique.

So over the shoulder of Mluna these three climbed next day and slept as well as they might among its snows rather than risk a night in the woods of the Dubious Land. And the morning came up radiant and the birds were full of song, but the forest underneath and the waste beyond it and the bare and ominous crags all wore the appearance of an unuttered threat.

Though Slith had an experience of twenty years of theft, yet he said little; only if one of the others made a stone roll with his foot, or, later on in the forest, if one of them stepped on a twig, he whispered sharply to them always the same words: “That is not business.” He knew that he could not

make them better thieves during a two days' journey, and whatever doubts he had he interfered no further.

From the shoulder of Mluna they dropped into the clouds, and from the clouds to the forest, to whose native beasts, as well the three thieves knew, all flesh was meat, whether it were the flesh of fish or man. There the thieves drew idolatrously from their pockets each one a separate god and prayed for protection in the unfortunate wood, and hoped therefrom for a threefold chance of escape, since if anything should eat one of them it were certain to eat them all, and they confided that the corollary might be true and all should escape if one did. Whether one of these gods was propitious and awake, or whether all of the three, or whether it was chance that brought them through the forest unmouthed by detestable beasts, none knoweth; but certainly neither the emissaries of the god that most they feared, nor the wrath of the topical god of that ominous place, brought their doom to the three adventurers there or then. And so it was that they came to Rumbly Heath, in the heart of the Dubious Land, whose stormy hillocks were the ground-swell and the after-wash of the earthquake lulled for a while. Something so huge that it seemed unfair to man that it should move so softly stalked splendidly by them, and only so barely did they escape its notice that one word rang and echoed through their three imaginations— "If — if — if." And when this danger was at last gone by they moved cautiously on again and presently saw the little harmless mipt, half fairy and half gnome, giving shrill, contented squeaks on the edge of the world. And they edged away unseen, for they said that the inquisitiveness of the mipt had become fabulous, and that, harmless as he was, he had a bad way with secrets; yet they probably loathed the way that he nuzzles dead white bones, and would not admit their loathing; for it does not become adventurers to care who eats their bones. Be this as it may, they edged away from the mipt, and came almost at once to the wizened tree, the goal-post of their adventure, and knew that beside them was the crack in the world and the bridge from Bad to Worse, and that underneath them stood the rocky house of Owner of the Box.

This was their simple plan: to slip into the corridor in the upper cliff; to run softly down it (of course with naked feet) under the warning to travellers that is graven upon stone, which interpreters take to be "It Is Better Not"; not to touch the berries that are there for a purpose, on the right side going down; and so to come to the guardian on his pedestal who had

slept for a thousand years and should be sleeping still; and go in through the open window. One man was to wait outside by the crack in the World until the others came out with the golden box, and, should they cry for help, he was to threaten at once to unfasten the iron clamp that kept the crack together. When the box was secured they were to travel all night and all the following day, until the cloud-banks that wrapped the slopes of Mluna were well between them and Owner of the Box.

The door in the cliff was open. They passed without a murmur down the cold steps, Slith leading them all the way. A glance of longing, no more, each gave to the beautiful berries. The guardian upon his pedestal was still asleep. Slorg climbed by a ladder, that Slith knew where to find, to the iron clamp across the crack in the World, and waited beside it with a chisel in his hand, listening closely for anything untoward, while his friends slipped into the house; and no sound came. And presently Slith and Sippy found the golden box: everything seemed happening as they had planned, it only remained to see if it was the right one and to escape with it from that dreadful place. Under the shelter of the pedestal, so near to the guardian that they could feel his warmth, which paradoxically had the effect of chilling the blood of the boldest of them, they smashed the emerald hasp and opened the golden box; and there they read by the light of ingenious sparks which Slith knew how to contrive, and even this poor light they hid with their bodies. What was their joy, even at that perilous moment, as they lurked between the guardian and the abyss, to find that the box contained fifteen peerless odes in the alcaic form, five sonnets that were by far the most beautiful in the world, nine ballads in the manner of Provence that had no equal in the treasuries of man, a poem addressed to a moth in twenty-eight perfect stanzas, a piece of blank verse of over a hundred lines on a level not yet known to have been attained by man, as well as fifteen lyrics on which no merchant would dare to set a price. They would have read them again, for they gave happy tears to a man and memories of dear things done in infancy, and brought sweet voices from far sepulchres; but Slith pointed imperiously to the way by which they had come, and extinguished the light; and Slorg and Sippy sighed, then took the box.

The guardian still slept the sleep that survived a thousand years.

As they came away they saw that indulgent chair close by the edge of the World in which Owner of the Box had lately sat reading selfishly and alone the most beautiful songs and verses that poet ever dreamed.

They came in silence to the foot of the stairs; and then it befell that as they drew near safely, in the night's most secret hour, some hand in an upper chamber lit a shocking light, lit it and made no sound.

For a moment it might have been an ordinary light, fatal as even that could very well be at such a moment as this; but when it began to follow them like an eye and to grow redder and redder as it watched them, then even optimism despaired.

And Sippy very unwisely attempted flight, and Slorg even as unwisely tried to hide; but Slith, knowing well why that light was lit in that secret upper chamber and *who* it was that lit it, leaped over the edge of the World and is falling from us still through the unreverberate blackness of the abyss.

THE INJUDICIOUS PRAYERS OF POMBO THE IDOLATER

Pombo the idolater had prayed to Ammuz a simple prayer, a necessary prayer, such as even an idol of ivory could very easily grant, and Ammuz had not immediately granted it. Pombo had therefore prayed to Tharma for the overthrow of Ammuz, an idol friendly to Tharma, and in doing this offended against the etiquette of the gods. Tharma refused to grant the little prayer. Pombo prayed frantically to all the gods of idolatry, for though it was a simple matter, yet it was very necessary to a man. And gods that were older than Ammuz rejected the prayers of Pombo, and even gods that were younger and therefore of greater repute. He prayed to them one by one, and they all refused to hear him; nor at first did he think at all of that subtle, divine etiquette against which he had offended. It occurred to him all at once as he prayed to his fiftieth idol, a little green-jade god whom the Chinese know, that all the idols were in league against him. When Pombo discovered this he resented his birth bitterly, and made lamentation and alleged that he was lost. He might have been seen then in any part of London haunting curiosity-shops and places where they sold idols of ivory or of stone, for he dwelt in London with others of his race though he was born in Burmah among those who hold Ganges holy. On drizzly evenings of November's worst his haggard face could be seen in the glow of some shop pressed close against the glass, where he would supplicate some calm, cross-legged idol till policemen moved him on. And after closing hours back he would go to his dingy room, in that part of our capital where English is seldom spoken, to supplicate little idols of his own. And when Pombo's simple, necessary prayer was equally refused by the idols of museums, auction-rooms, shops, then he took counsel with himself and purchased incense and burned it in a brazier before his own cheap little idols, and played the while upon an instrument such as that wherewith men charm snakes. And still the idols clung to their etiquette.

Whether Pombo knew about this etiquette and considered it frivolous in the face of his need, or whether his need, now grown desperate, unhinged his mind, I know not, but Pombo the idolater took a stick and suddenly turned iconoclast.

Pombo the iconoclast immediately left his house, leaving his idols to be swept away with the dust and so to mingle with Man, and went to an arch-

idolater of repute who carved idols out of rare stones, and put his case before him. The arch-idolater who made idols of his own rebuked Pombo in the name of Man for having broken his idols— "for hath not Man made them?" the arch-idolater said; and concerning the idols themselves he spoke long and learnedly, explaining divine etiquette, and how Pombo had offended, and how no idol in the world would listen to Pombo's prayer. When Pombo heard this he wept and made bitter outcry, and cursed the gods of ivory and the gods of jade, and the hand of Man that made them, but most of all he cursed their etiquette that had undone, as he said, an innocent man; so that at last that arch-idolater, who made idols of his own, stopped in his work upon an idol of jasper for a king that was weary of Wosh, and took compassion on Pombo, and told him that though no idol in the world would listen to his prayer, yet only a little way over the edge of it a certain disreputable idol sat who knew nothing of etiquette, and granted prayers that no respectable god would ever consent to hear. When Pombo heard this he took two handfuls of the arch-idolater's beard and kissed them joyfully, and dried his tears and became his old impertinent self again. And he that carved from jasper the usurper of Wosh explained how in the village of World's End, at the furthest end of Last Street, there is a hole that you take to be a well, close by the garden wall, but that if you lower yourself by your hands over the edge of the hole, and feel about with your feet till they find a ledge, that is the top step of a flight of stairs that takes you down over the edge of the World. "For all that men know, those stairs may have a purpose and even a bottom step," said the arch-idolater, "but discussion about the lower flights is idle." Then the teeth of Pombo chattered, for he feared the darkness, but he that made idols of his own explained that those stairs were always lit by the faint blue gloaming in which the World spins. "Then," he said, "you will go by Lonely House and under the bridge that leads from the House to Nowhere, and whose purpose is not guessed; thence past Maharrion, the god of flowers, and his high-priest, who is neither bird nor cat; and so you will come to the little idol Duth, the disreputable god that will grant your prayer." And he went on carving again at his idol of jasper for the king who was weary of Wosh; and Pombo thanked him and went singing away, for in his vernacular mind he thought that "he *had* the gods."

It is a long journey from London to World's End, and Pombo had no money left, yet within five weeks he was strolling along Last Street; but

how he contrived to get there I will not say, for it was not entirely honest. And Pombo found the well at the end of the garden beyond the end house of Last Street, and many thoughts ran through his mind as he hung by his hands from the edge, but chiefest of all those thoughts was one that said the gods were laughing at him through the mouth of the arch-idolater, their prophet, and the thought beat in his head till it ached like his wrists ... and then he found the step.

And Pombo walked downstairs. There, sure enough, was the gloaming in which the world spins, and stars shone far off in it faintly; there was nothing before him as he went downstairs but that strange blue waste of gloaming, with its multitudes of stars, and comets plunging through it on outward journeys and comets returning home. And then he saw the lights of the bridge to Nowhere, and all of a sudden he was in the glare of the shimmering parlour-window of Lonely House; and he heard voices there pronouncing words, and the voices were nowise human, and but for his bitter need he had screamed and fled. Halfway between the voices and Maharrion, whom he now saw standing out from the world, covered in rainbow halos, he perceived the weird grey beast that is neither cat nor bird. As Pombo hesitated, chilly with fear, he heard those voices grow louder in Lonely House, and at that he stealthily moved a few steps lower, and then rushed past the beast. The beast intently watched Maharrion hurling up bubbles that are every one a season of spring in unknown constellations, calling the swallows home to unimagined fields, watched him without even turning to look at Pombo, and saw him drop into the Linlunlarna, the river that rises at the edge of the World, the golden pollen that sweetens the tide of the river and is carried away from the World to be a joy to the Stars. And there before Pombo was the little disreputable god who cares nothing for etiquette and will answer prayers that are refused by all the respectable idols. And whether the view of him, at last, excited Pombo's eagerness, or whether his need was greater than he could bear that it drove him so swiftly downstairs, or whether, as is most likely, he ran too fast past the beast, I do not know, and it does not matter to Pombo; but at any rate he could not stop, as he had designed, in attitude of prayer at the feet of Duth, but ran on past him down the narrowing steps, clutching at smooth, bare rocks till he fell from the World as, when our hearts miss a beat, we fall in dreams and wake up with a dreadful jolt; but there was no waking up for Pombo, who still fell on towards the incurious stars, and his fate is even one with the fate of Slith.

THE LOOT OF BOMBASHARNA

Things had grown too hot for Shard, captain of pirates, on all the seas that he knew. The ports of Spain were closed to him; they knew him in San Domingo; men winked in Syracuse when he went by; the two Kings of the Sicilies never smiled within an hour of speaking of him; there were huge rewards for his head in every capital city, with pictures of it for identification — *and all the pictures were unflattering*. Therefore Captain Shard decided that the time had come to tell his men the secret.

Riding off Teneriffe one night, he called them all together. He generously admitted that there were things in the past that might require explanation: the crowns that the Princes of Aragon had sent to their nephews the Kings of the two Americas had certainly never reached their Most Sacred Majesties. Where, men might ask, were the eyes of Captain Stobbud? Who had been burning towns on the Patagonian seaboard? Why should such a ship as theirs choose pearls for cargo? Why so much blood on the decks and so many guns? And where was the *Nancy*, the *Lark*, or the *Margaret Belle*? Such questions as these, he urged, might be asked by the inquisitive, and if counsel for the defence should happen to be a fool, and unacquainted with the ways of the sea, they might become involved in troublesome legal formulae. And Bloody Bill, as they rudely called Mr. Gagg, a member of the crew, looked up at the sky, and said that it was a windy night and looked like hanging. And some of those present thoughtfully stroked their necks while Captain Shard unfolded to them his plan. He said the time was come to quit the *Desperate Lark*, for she was too well known to the navies of four kingdoms, and a fifth was getting to know her, and others had suspicions. (More cutters than even Captain Shard suspected were already looking for her jolly black flag with its neat skull-and-crossbones in yellow.) There was a little archipelago that he knew of on the wrong side of the Sargasso Sea; there were about thirty islands there, bare, ordinary islands, but one of them floated. He had noticed it years ago, and had gone ashore and never told a soul, but had quietly anchored it with the anchor of his ship to the bottom of the sea, which just there was profoundly deep, and had made the thing the secret of his life, determining to marry and settle down there if it ever became impossible to earn his livelihood in the usual way at sea. When first he saw it, it was drifting slowly, with the wind in the tops of the trees; but if

the cable had not rusted away, it should be still where he left it, and they would make a rudder and hollow out cabins below, and at night they would hoist sails to the trunks of the trees and sail wherever they liked.

And all the pirates cheered, for they wanted to set their feet on land again somewhere where the hangman would not come and jerk them off it at once; and bold men though they were, it was a strain seeing so many lights coming their way at night. Even then...! But it swerved away again and was lost in the mist.

And Captain Shard said that they would need to get provisions first, and he, for one, intended to marry before he settled down; and so they should have one more fight before they left the ship, and sack the sea-coast city of Bombasharna and take from it provisions for several years, while he himself would marry the Queen of the South. And again the pirates cheered, for often they had seen seacoast Bombasharna, and had always envied its opulence from the sea.

So they set all sail, and often altered their course, and dodged and fled from strange lights till dawn appeared, and all day long fled southwards. And by evening they saw the silver spires of slender Bombasharna, a city that was the glory of the coast. And in the midst of it, far away though they were, they saw the palace of the Queen of the South; and it was so full of windows all looking toward the sea, and they were so full of light, both from the sunset that was fading upon the water and from candles that maids were lighting one by one, that it looked far off like a pearl, shimmering still in its haliotis shell, still wet from the sea.

So Captain Shard and his pirates saw it, at evening over the water, and thought of rumours that said that Bombasharna was the loveliest city of the coasts of the world, and that its palace was lovelier even than Bombasharna; but for the Queen of the South rumour had no comparison. Then night came down and hid the silver spires, and Shard slipped on through the gathering darkness until by midnight the piratic ship lay under the seaward battlements.

And at the hour when sick men mostly die, and sentries on lonely ramparts stand to arms, exactly half-an-hour before dawn, Shard, with two rowing boats and half his crew, with craftily muffled oars, landed below the battlements. They were through the gateway of the palace itself before the alarm was sounded, and as soon as they heard the alarm Shard’s gunners at sea opened upon the town, and before the sleepy soldiery of Bombasharna

knew whether the danger was from the land or the sea, Shard had successfully captured the Queen of the South. They would have looted all day that silver sea-coast city, but there appeared with dawn suspicious topsails just along the horizon. Therefore the captain with his Queen went down to the shore at once and hastily re-embarked and sailed away with what loot they had hurriedly got, and with fewer men, for they had to fight a good deal to get back to the boat. They cursed all day the interference of those ominous ships which steadily grew nearer. There were six ships at first, and that night they slipped away from all but two; but all the next day those two were still in sight, and each of them had more guns than the *Desperate Lark*. All the next night Shard dodged about the sea, but the two ships separated and one kept him in sight, and the next morning it was alone with Shard on the sea, and his archipelago was just in sight, the secret of his life.

And Shard saw he must fight, and a bad fight it was, and yet it suited Shard's purpose, for he had more merry men when the fight began than he needed for his island. And they got it over before any other ship came up; and Shard put all adverse evidence out of the way, and came that night to the islands near the Sargasso Sea.

Long before it was light the survivors of the crew were peering at the sea, and when dawn came there was the island, no bigger than two ships, straining hard at its anchor, with the wind in the tops of the trees.

And then they landed and dug cabins below and raised the anchor out of the deep sea, and soon they made the island what they called shipshape. But the *Desperate Lark* they sent away empty under full sail to sea, where more nations than Shard suspected were watching for her, and where she was presently captured by an admiral of Spain, who, when he found none of that famous crew on board to hang by the neck from the yard-arm, grew ill through disappointment.

And Shard on his island offered the Queen of the South the choicest of the old wines of Provence, and for adornment gave her Indian jewels looted from galleons with treasure for Madrid, and spread a table where she dined in the sun, while in some cabin below he bade the least coarse of his mariners sing; yet always she was morose and moody towards him, and often at evening he was heard to say that he wished he knew more about the ways of Queens. So they lived for years, the pirates mostly gambling and drinking below, Captain Shard trying to please the Queen of the South, and

she never wholly forgetting Bombasharna. When they needed new provisions they hoisted sails on the trees, and as long as no ship came in sight they scudded before the wind, with the water rippling over the beach of the island; but as soon as they sighted a ship the sails came down, and they became an ordinary uncharted rock.

They mostly moved by night; sometimes they hovered off sea-coast towns as of old, sometimes they boldly entered river-mouths, and even attached themselves for a while to the mainland, whence they would plunder the neighbourhood and escape again to sea. And if a ship was wrecked on their island of a night they said it was all to the good. They grew very crafty in seamanship, and cunning in what they did, for they knew that any news of the *Desperate Lark*'s old crew would bring hangmen from the interior running down to every port.

And no one is known to have found them out or to have annexed their island; but a rumour arose and passed from port to port and every place where sailors meet together, and even survives to this day, of a dangerous uncharted rock anywhere between Plymouth and the Horn, which would suddenly rise in the safest track of ships, and upon which vessels were supposed to have been wrecked, leaving, strangely enough, no evidence of their doom. There was a little speculation about it at first, till it was silenced by the chance remark of a man old with wandering: "It is one of the mysteries that haunt the sea."

And almost Captain Shard and the Queen of the South lived happily ever after, though still at evening those on watch in the trees would see their captain sit with a puzzled air or hear him muttering now and again in a discontented way: "I wish I knew more about the ways of Queens."

MISS CUBBIDGE AND THE DRAGON OF ROMANCE

This tale is told in the balconies of Belgrave Square and among the towers of Pont Street; men sing it at evening in the Brompton Road.

Little upon her eighteenth birthday thought Miss Cubbidge, of Number 12A Prince of Wales' Square, that before another year had gone its way she would lose the sight of that unshapely oblong that was so long her home. And, had you told her further that within that year all trace of that so-called square, and of the day when her father was elected by a thumping majority to share in the guidance of the destinies of the empire, should utterly fade from her memory, she would merely have said in that affected voice of hers, "Go to!"

There was nothing about it in the daily Press, the policy of her father's party had no provision for it, there was no hint of it in conversation at evening parties to which Miss Cubbidge went: there was nothing to warn her at all that a loathsome dragon with golden scales that rattled as he went should have come up clean out of the prime of romance and gone by night (so far as we know) through Hammersmith, and come to Ardle Mansions, and then had turned to his left, which of course brought him to Miss Cubbidge's father's house.

There sat Miss Cubbidge at evening on her balcony quite alone, waiting for her father to be made a baronet. She was wearing walking-boots and a hat and a low-necked evening dress; for a painter was but just now painting her portrait and neither she nor the painter saw anything odd in the strange combination. She did not notice the roar of the dragon's golden scales, nor distinguish above the manifold lights of London the small, red glare of his eyes. He suddenly lifted his head, a blaze of gold, over the balcony; he did not appear a yellow dragon then, for his glistening scales reflected the beauty that London puts upon her only at evening and night. She screamed, but to no knight, nor knew what knight to call on, nor guessed where were the dragons' overthrowers of far, romantic days, nor what mightier game they chased, or what wars they waged; perchance they were busy even then arming for Armageddon.

Out of the balcony of her father's house in Prince of Wales' Square, the painted dark-green balcony that grew blacker every year, the dragon lifted Miss Cubbidge and spread his rattling wings, and London fell away like an

old fashion. And England fell away, and the smoke of its factories, and the round material world that goes humming round the sun vexed and pursued by time, until there appeared the eternal and ancient lands of Romance lying low by mystical seas.

You had not pictured Miss Cubbidge stroking the golden head of one of the dragons of song with one hand idly, while with the other she sometimes played with pearls brought up from lonely places of the sea. They filled huge haliotis shells with pearls and laid them there beside her, they brought her emeralds which she set to flash among the tresses of her long black hair, they brought her threaded sapphires for her cloak: all this the princes of fable did and the elves and the gnomes of myth. And partly she still lived, and partly she was one with long-ago and with those sacred tales that nurses tell, when all their children are good, and evening has come, and the fire is burning well, and the soft pat-pat of the snowflakes on the pane is like the furtive tread of fearful things in old, enchanted woods. If at first she missed those dainty novelties among which she was reared, the old, sufficient song of the mystical sea singing of faery lore at first soothed and at last consoled her. Even, she forgot those advertisements of pills that are so dear to England; even, she forgot political cant and the things that one discusses and the things that one does not, and had perforce to content herself with seeing sailing by huge golden-laden galleons with treasure for Madrid, and the merry skull-and-cross-bones of the pirateers, and the tiny nautilus setting out to sea, and ships of heroes trafficking in romance or of princes seeking for enchanted isles.

It was not by chains that the dragon kept her there, but by one of the spells of old. To one to whom the facilities of the daily Press had for so long been accorded spells would have palled — you would have said — and galleons after a time and all things out-of-date. After a time. But whether the centuries passed her or whether the years or whether no time at all, she did not know. If anything indicated the passing of time it was the rhythm of elfin horns blowing upon the heights. If the centuries went by her the spell that bound her gave her also perennial youth, and kept alight for ever the lantern by her side, and saved from decay the marble palace facing the mystical sea. And if no time went by her there at all, her single moment on those marvellous coasts was turned as it were to a crystal reflecting a thousand scenes. If it was all a dream, it was a dream that knew no morning and no fading away. The tide roamed on and whispered of mastery and of

myth, while near that captive lady, asleep in his marble tank the golden dragon dreamed: and a little way out from the coast all that the dragon dreamed showed faintly in the mist that lay over the sea. He never dreamed of any rescuing knight. So long as he dreamed, it was twilight; but when he came up nimbly out of his tank night fell and starlight glistened on the dripping, golden scales.

There he and his captive either defeated Time or never encountered him at all; while, in the world we know, raged Roncesvalles or battles yet to be — I know not to what part of the shore of Romance he bore her. Perhaps she became one of those princesses of whom fable loves to tell, but let it suffice that there she lived by the sea: and kings ruled, and Demons ruled, and kings came again, and many cities returned to their native dust, and still she abided there, and still her marble palace passed not away nor the power that there was in the dragon's spell.

And only once did there ever come to her a message from the world that of old she knew. It came in a pearly ship across the mystical sea; it was from an old school-friend that she had had in Putney, merely a note, no more, in a little, neat, round hand: it said, "It is not Proper for you to be there alone."

THE QUEST OF THE QUEEN'S TEARS

Sylvia, Queen of the Woods, in her woodland palace, held court, and made a mockery of her suitors. She would sing to them, she said, she would give them banquets, she would tell them tales of legendary days, her jugglers should caper before them, her armies salute them, her fools crack jests with them and make whimsical quips, only she could not love them.

This was not the way, they said, to treat princes in their splendour and mysterious troubadours concealing kingly names; it was not in accordance with fable; myth had no precedent for it. She should have thrown her glove, they said, into some lion's den, she should have asked for a score of venomous heads of the serpents of Licantara, or demanded the death of any notable dragon, or sent them all upon some deadly quest, but that she could not love them — ! It was unheard of — it had no parallel in the annals of romance.

And then she said that if they must needs have a quest she would offer her hand to him who first should move her to tears: and the quest should be called, for reference in histories or song, the Quest of the Queen's Tears, and he that achieved them she would wed, be he only a petty duke of lands unknown to romance.

And many were moved to anger, for they hoped for some bloody quest; but the old lords chamberlain said, as they muttered among themselves in a far, dark end of the chamber, that the quest was hard and wise, for that if she could ever weep she might also love. They had known her all her childhood; she had never sighed. Many men had she seen, suitors and courtiers, and had never turned her head after one went by. Her beauty was as still sunsets of bitter evenings when all the world is frore, a wonder and a chill. She was as a sun-stricken mountain uplifted alone, all beautiful with ice, a desolate and lonely radiance late at evening far up beyond the comfortable world, not quite to be companioned by the stars, the doom of the mountaineer.

If she could weep, they said, she could love, they said.

And she smiled pleasantly on those ardent princes, and troubadours concealing kingly names.

Then one by one they told, each suitor prince the story of his love, with outstretched hands and kneeling on the knee; and very sorry and pitiful

were the tales, so that often up in the galleries some maid of the palace wept. And very graciously she nodded her head like a listless magnolia in the deeps of the night moving idly to all the breezes its glorious bloom.

And when the princes had told their desperate loves and had departed away with no other spoil than of their own tears only, even then there came the unknown troubadours and told their tales in song, concealing their gracious names.

And there was one, Ackronnion, clothed with rags, on which was the dust of roads, and underneath the rags was war-scarred armour whereon were the dints of blows; and when he stroked his harp and sang his song, in the gallery above maidens wept, and even old lords chamberlain whimpered among themselves and thereafter laughed through their tears and said: “It is easy to make old people weep and to bring idle tears from lazy girls; but he will not set a-weeping the Queen of the Woods.”

And graciously she nodded, and he was the last. And disconsolate went away those dukes and princes, and troubadours in disguise. Yet Ackronnion pondered as he went away.

King he was of Afarmah, Lool and Haf, over-lord of Zeroora and hilly Chang, and duke of the dukedoms of Molong and Mlash, none of them unfamiliar with romance or unknown or overlooked in the making of myth. He pondered as he went in his thin disguise.

Now by those that do not remember their childhood, having other things to do, be it understood that underneath fairyland, which is, as all men know, at the edge of the world, there dwelleth the Gladsome Beast. A synonym he for joy.

It is known how the lark in its zenith, children at play out-of-doors, good witches and jolly old parents have all been compared — how aptly! — with this very same Gladsome Beast. Only one “crab” he has (if I may use slang for a moment to make myself perfectly clear), only one drawback, and that is that in the gladness of his heart he spoils the cabbages of the Old Man Who Looks After Fairyland, — and of course he eats men.

It must further be understood that whoever may obtain the tears of the Gladsome Beast in a bowl, and become drunken upon them, may move all persons to shed tears of joy so long as he remains inspired by the potion to sing or to make music.

Now Ackronnion pondered in this wise: that if he could obtain the tears of the Gladsome Beast by means of his art, withholding him from violence

by the spell of music, and if a friend should slay the Gladsome Beast before his weeping ceased — for an end must come to weeping even with men — that so he might get safe away with the tears, and drink them before the Queen of the Woods and move her to tears of joy. He sought out therefore a humble knightly man who cared not for the beauty of Sylvia, Queen of the Woods, but had found a woodland maiden of his own once long ago in summer. And the man's name was Arrath, a subject of Ackronnion, a knight-at-arms of the spear-guard: and together they set out through the fields of fable until they came to Fairyland, a kingdom sunning itself (as all men know) for leagues along the edges of the world. And by a strange old pathway they came to the land they sought, through a wind blowing up the pathway sheer from space with a kind of metallic taste from the roving stars. Even so they came to the windy house of thatch where dwells the Old Man Who Looks After Fairyland sitting by parlour windows that look away from the world. He made them welcome in his star-ward parlour, telling them tales of Space, and when they named to him their perilous quest he said it would be a charity to kill the Gladsome Beast; for he was clearly one of those that liked not its happy ways. And then he took them out through his back door, for the front door had no pathway nor even a step — from it the old man used to empty his slops sheer on to the Southern Cross — and so they came to the garden wherein his cabbages were, and those flowers that only blow in Fairyland, turning their faces always towards the comet, and he pointed them out the way to the place he called Underneath, where the Gladsome Beast had his lair. Then they manoeuvred. Ackronnion was to go by the way of the steps with his harp and an agate bowl, while Arrath went round by a crag on the other side. Then the Old Man Who Looks After Fairyland went back to his windy house, muttering angrily as he passed his cabbages, for he did not love the ways of the Gladsome Beast; and the two friends parted on their separate ways.

Nothing perceived them but that ominous crow glutted overlong already upon the flesh of man.

The wind blew bleak from the stars.

At first there was dangerous climbing, and then Ackronnion gained the smooth, broad steps that led from the edge to the lair, and at that moment heard at the top of the steps the continuous chuckles of the Gladsome Beast.

He feared then that its mirth might be insuperable, not to be saddened by the most grievous song; nevertheless he did not turn back then, but softly

climbed the stairs and, placing the agate bowl upon a step, struck up the chaunt called Dolorous. It told of desolate, regretted things befallen happy cities long since in the prime of the world. It told of how the gods and beasts and men had long ago loved beautiful companions, and long ago in vain. It told of the golden host of happy hopes, but not of their achieving. It told how Love scorned Death, but told of Death's laughter. The contented chuckles of the Gladsome Beast suddenly ceased in his lair. He rose and shook himself. He was still unhappy. Ackronnion still sang on the chaunt called Dolorous. The Gladsome Beast came mournfully up to him. Ackronnion ceased not for the sake of his panic, but still sang on. He sang of the malignity of time. Two tears welled large in the eyes of the Gladsome Beast. Ackronnion moved the agate bowl to a suitable spot with his foot. He sang of autumn and of passing away. Then the beast wept as the frore hills weep in the thaw, and the tears splashed big into the agate bowl. Ackronnion desperately chaunted on; he told of the glad unnoticed things men see and do not see again, of sunlight beheld unheeded on faces now withered away. The bowl was full. Ackronnion was desperate: the Beast was so close. Once he thought that its mouth was watering! — but it was only the tears that had run on the lips of the Beast. He felt as a morsel! The Beast was ceasing to weep! He sang of worlds that had disappointed the gods. And all of a sudden, crash! and the staunch spear of Arrath went home behind the shoulder, and the tears and the joyful ways of the Gladsome Beast were ended and over for ever.

And carefully they carried the bowl of tears away, leaving the body of the Gladsome Beast as a change of diet for the ominous crow; and going by the windy house of thatch they said farewell to the Old Man Who Looks After Fairyland, who when he heard of the deed rubbed his hands together and mumbled again and again, "And a very good thing, too. My cabbages! My cabbages!"

And not long after Ackronnion sang again in the sylvan palace of the Queen of the Woods, having first drunk all the tears in his agate bowl. And it was a gala night, and all the court were there and ambassadors from the lands of legend and myth, and even some from Terra Cognita.

And Ackronnion sang as he never sang before, and will not sing again. O, but dolorous, dolorous, are all the ways of man, few and fierce are his days, and the end trouble, and vain, vain his endeavour: and woman — who

shall tell of it? — her doom is written with man's by listless, careless gods with their faces to other spheres.

Somewhat thus he began, and then inspiration seized him, and all the trouble in the beauty of his song may not be set down by me: there was much of gladness in it, and all mingled with grief: it was like the way of man: it was like our destiny.

Sobs arose at his song, sighs came back along echoes: seneschals, soldiers, sobbed, and a clear cry made the maidens; like rain the tears came down from gallery to gallery.

All round the Queen of the Woods was a storm of sobbing and sorrow.

But no, she would not weep.

THE HOARD OF THE GIBBELINS

The Gibbelins eat, as is well known, nothing less good than man. Their evil tower is joined to Terra Cognita, to the lands we know, by a bridge. Their hoard is beyond reason; avarice has no use for it; they have a separate cellar for emeralds and a separate cellar for sapphires; they have filled a hole with gold and dig it up when they need it. And the only use that is known for their ridiculous wealth is to attract to their larder a continual supply of food. In times of famine they have even been known to scatter rubies abroad, a little trail of them to some city of Man, and sure enough their larders would soon be full again.

Their tower stands on the other side of that river known to Homer — *ho rhoos okeanoio*, as he called it — which surrounds the world. And where the river is narrow and fordable the tower was built by the Gibbelins' gluttonous sires, for they liked to see burglars rowing easily to their steps. Some nourishment that common soil has not the huge trees drained there with their colossal roots from both banks of the river.

There the Gibbelins lived and discreditably fed.

Alderic, Knight of the Order of the City and the Assault, hereditary Guardian of the King's Peace of Mind, a man not unremembered among makers of myth, pondered so long upon the Gibbelins' hoard that by now he deemed it his. Alas that I should say of so perilous a venture, undertaken at dead of night by a valorous man, that its motive was sheer avarice! Yet upon avarice only the Gibbelins relied to keep their larders full, and once in every hundred years sent spies into the cities of men to see how avarice did, and always the spies returned again to the tower saying that all was well.

It may be thought that, as the years went on and men came by fearful ends on that tower's wall, fewer and fewer would come to the Gibbelins' table: but the Gibbelins found otherwise.

Not in the folly and frivolity of his youth did Alderic come to the tower, but he studied carefully for several years the manner in which burglars met their doom when they went in search of the treasure that he considered his. *In every case they had entered by the door*.

He consulted those who gave advice on this quest; he noted every detail and cheerfully paid their fees, and determined to do nothing that they advised, for what were their clients now? No more than examples of the

savoury art, and mere half-forgotten memories of a meal; and many, perhaps, no longer even that.

These were the requisites for the quest that these men used to advise: a horse, a boat, mail armour, and at least three men-at-arms. Some said, “Blow the horn at the tower door”; others said, “Do not touch it.”

Alderic thus decided: he would take no horse down to the river’s edge, he would not row along it in a boat, and he would go alone and by way of the Forest Unpassable.

How pass, you may say, the unpassable? This was his plan: there was a dragon he knew of who if peasants’ prayers are heeded deserved to die, not alone because of the number of maidens he cruelly slew, but because he was bad for the crops; he ravaged the very land and was the bane of a dukedom.

Now Alderic determined to go up against him. So he took horse and spear and pricked till he met the dragon, and the dragon came out against him breathing bitter smoke. And to him Alderic shouted, “Hath foul dragon ever slain true knight?” And well the dragon knew that this had never been, and he hung his head and was silent, for he was glutted with blood. “Then,” said the knight, “if thou would’st ever taste maiden’s blood again thou shalt be my trusty steed, and if not, by this spear there shall befall thee all that the troubadours tell of the dooms of thy breed.”

And the dragon did not open his ravening mouth, nor rush upon the knight, breathing out fire; for well he knew the fate of those that did these things, but he consented to the terms imposed, and swore to the knight to become his trusty steed.

It was on a saddle upon this dragon’s back that Alderic afterwards sailed above the unpassable forest, even above the tops of those measureless trees, children of wonder. But first he pondered that subtle plan of his which was more profound than merely to avoid all that had been done before; and he commanded a blacksmith, and the blacksmith made him a pickaxe.

Now there was great rejoicing at the rumour of Alderic’s quest, for all folk knew that he was a cautious man, and they deemed that he would succeed and enrich the world, and they rubbed their hands in the cities at the thought of largesse; and there was joy among all men in Alderic’s country, except perchance among the lenders of money, who feared they would soon be paid. And there was rejoicing also because men hoped that when the Gibbelins were robbed of their hoard, they would shatter their high-built bridge and break the golden chains that bound them to the world,

and drift back, they and their tower, to the moon, from which they had come and to which they rightly belonged. There was little love for the Gibbelins, though all men envied their hoard.

So they all cheered, that day when he mounted his dragon, as though he was already a conqueror, and what pleased them more than the good that they hoped he would do to the world was that he scattered gold as he rode away; for he would not need it, he said, if he found the Gibbelins' hoard, and he would not need it more if he smoked on the Gibbelins' table.

When they heard that he had rejected the advice of those that gave it, some said that the knight was mad, and others said he was greater than those what gave the advice, but none appreciated the worth of his plan.

He reasoned thus: for centuries men had been well advised and had gone by the cleverest way, while the Gibbelins came to expect them to come by boat and to look for them at the door whenever their larder was empty, even as a man looketh for a snipe in a marsh; but how, said Alderic, if a snipe should sit in the top of a tree, and would men find him there? Assuredly never! So Alderic decided to swim the river and not to go by the door, but to pick his way into the tower through the stone. Moreover, it was in his mind to work below the level of the ocean, the river (as Homer knew) that girdles the world, so that as soon as he made a hole in the wall the water should pour in, confounding the Gibbelins, and flooding the cellars, rumoured to be twenty feet in depth, and therein he would dive for emeralds as a diver dives for pearls.

And on the day that I tell of he galloped away from his home scattering largesse of gold, as I have said, and passed through many kingdoms, the dragon snapping at maidens as he went, but being unable to eat them because of the bit in his mouth, and earning no gentler reward than a spurthrust where he was softest. And so they came to the swart arboreal precipice of the unpassable forest. The dragon rose at it with a rattle of wings. Many a farmer near the edge of the world saw him up there where yet the twilight lingered, a faint, black, wavering line; and mistaking him for a row of geese going inland from the ocean, went into their houses cheerily rubbing their hands and saying that winter was coming, and that we should soon have snow. Soon even there the twilight faded away, and when they descended at the edge of the world it was night and the moon was shining. Ocean, the ancient river, narrow and shallow there, flowed by and made no murmur. Whether the Gibbelins banqueted or whether they

watched by the door, they also made no murmur. And Alderic dismounted and took his armour off, and saying one prayer to his lady, swam with his pickaxe. He did not part from his sword, for fear that he meet with a Gibbelin. Landed the other side, he began to work at once, and all went well with him. Nothing put out its head from any window, and all were lighted so that nothing within could see him in the dark. The blows of his pickaxe were dulled in the deep walls. All night he worked, no sound came to molest him, and at dawn the last rock swerved and tumbled inwards, and the river poured in after. Then Alderic took a stone, and went to the bottom step, and hurled the stone at the door; he heard the echoes roll into the tower, then he ran back and dived through the hole in the wall.

He was in the emerald-cellar. There was no light in the lofty vault above him, but, diving through twenty feet of water, he felt the floor all rough with emeralds, and open coffers full of them. By a faint ray of the moon he saw that the water was green with them, and, easily filling a satchel, he rose again to the surface; and there were the Gibbelins waist-deep in the water, with torches in their hands! And, without saying a word, *or even smiling*, they neatly hanged him on the outer wall — and the tale is one of those that have not a happy ending.

HOW NUTH WOULD HAVE PRACTISED HIS ART UPON THE GNOLES

Despite the advertisements of rival firms, it is probable that every tradesman knows that nobody in business at the present time has a position equal to that of Mr. Nuth. To those outside the magic circle of business, his name is scarcely known; he does not need to advertise, he is consummate. He is superior even to modern competition, and, whatever claims they boast, his rivals know it. His terms are moderate, so much cash down when the goods are delivered, so much in blackmail afterwards. He consults your convenience. His skill may be counted upon; I have seen a shadow on a windy night move more noisily than Nuth, for Nuth is a burglar by trade. Men have been known to stay in country houses and to send a dealer afterwards to bargain for a piece of tapestry that they saw there — some article of furniture, some picture. This is bad taste: but those whose culture is more elegant invariably send Nuth a night or two after their visit. He has a way with tapestry; you would scarcely notice that the edges had been cut. And often when I see some huge, new house full of old furniture and portraits from other ages, I say to myself, “These mouldering chairs, these full-length ancestors and carved mahogany are the produce of the incomparable Nuth.”

It may be urged against my use of the word incomparable that in the burglary business the name of Slith stands paramount and alone; and of this I am not ignorant; but Slith is a classic, and lived long ago, and knew nothing at all of modern competition; besides which the surprising nature of his doom has possibly cast a glamour upon Slith that exaggerates in our eyes his undoubted merits.

It must not be thought that I am a friend of Nuth’s; on the contrary such politics as I have are on the side of Property; and he needs no words from me, for his position is almost unique in trade, being among the very few that do not need to advertise.

At the time that my story begins Nuth lived in a roomy house in Belgrave Square: in his inimitable way he had made friends with the caretaker. The place suited Nuth, and, whenever anyone came to inspect it before purchase, the caretaker used to praise the house in the words that Nuth had suggested. “If it wasn’t for the drains,” she would say, “it’s the

finest house in London," and when they pounced on this remark and asked questions about the drains, she would answer them that the drains also were good, but not so good as the house. They did not see Nuth when they went over the rooms, but Nuth was there.

Here in a neat black dress on one spring morning came an old woman whose bonnet was lined with red, asking for Mr. Nuth; and with her came her large and awkward son. Mrs. Eggins, the caretaker, glanced up the street, and then she let them in, and left them to wait in the drawing-room amongst furniture all mysterious with sheets. For a long while they waited, and then there was a smell of pipe-tobacco, and there was Nuth standing quite close to them.

"Lord," said the old woman whose bonnet was lined with red, "you did make me start." And then she saw by his eyes that that was not the way to speak to Mr. Nuth.

And at last Nuth spoke, and very nervously the old woman explained that her son was a likely lad, and had been in business already but wanted to better himself, and she wanted Mr. Nuth to teach him a livelihood.

First of all Nuth wanted to see a business reference, and when he was shown one from a jeweller with whom he happened to be hand-in-glove the upshot of it was that he agreed to take young Tonker (for this was the surname of the likely lad) and to make him his apprentice. And the old woman whose bonnet was lined with red went back to her little cottage in the country, and every evening said to her old man, "Tonker, we must fasten the shutters of a night-time, for Tommy's a burglar now."

The details of the likely lad's apprenticeship I do not propose to give; for those that are in the business know those details already, and those that are in other businesses care only for their own, while men of leisure who have no trade at all would fail to appreciate the gradual degrees by which Tommy Tonker came first to cross bare boards, covered with little obstacles in the dark, without making any sound, and then to go silently up creaky stairs, and then to open doors, and lastly to climb.

Let it suffice that the business prospered greatly, while glowing reports of Tommy Tonker's progress were sent from time to time to the old woman whose bonnet was lined with red in the labourious handwriting of Nuth. Nuth had given up lessons in writing very early, for he seemed to have some prejudice against forgery, and therefore considered writing a waste of time. And then there came the transaction with Lord Castlenorman at his

Surrey residence. Nuth selected a Saturday night, for it chanced that Saturday was observed as Sabbath in the family of Lord Castlenorman, and by eleven o'clock the whole house was quiet. Five minutes before midnight Tommy Tonker, instructed by Mr. Nuth, who waited outside, came away with one pocketful of rings and shirt-studs. It was quite a light pocketful, but the jewellers in Paris could not match it without sending specially to Africa, so that Lord Castlenorman had to borrow bone shirt-studs.

Not even rumour whispered the name of Nuth. Were I to say that this turned his head, there are those to whom the assertion would give pain, for his associates hold that his astute judgment was unaffected by circumstance. I will say, therefore, that it spurred his genius to plan what no burglar had ever planned before. It was nothing less than to burgle the house of the gnoles. And this that abstemious man unfolded to Tonker over a cup of tea. Had Tonker not been nearly insane with pride over their recent transaction, and had he not been blinded by a veneration for Nuth, he would have — but I cry over spilt milk. He expostulated respectfully; he said he would rather not go; he said it was not fair; he allowed himself to argue; and in the end, one windy October morning with a menace in the air found him and Nuth drawing near to the dreadful wood.

Nuth, by weighing little emeralds against pieces of common rock, had ascertained the probable weight of those house-ornaments that the gnoles are believed to possess in the narrow, lofty house wherein they have dwelt from of old. They decided to steal two emeralds and to carry them between them on a cloak; but if they should be too heavy one must be dropped at once. Nuth warned young Tonker against greed, and explained that the emeralds were worth less than cheese until they were safe away from the dreadful wood.

Everything had been planned, and they walked now in silence.

No track led up to the sinister gloom of the trees, either of men or cattle; not even a poacher had been there snaring elves for over a hundred years. You did not trespass twice in the dells of the gnoles. And, apart from the things that were done there, the trees themselves were a warning, and did not wear the wholesome look of those that we plant ourselves.

The nearest village was some miles away with the backs of all its houses turned to the wood, and without one window at all facing in that direction. They did not speak of it there, and elsewhere it is unheard of.

Into this wood stepped Nuth and Tommy Tonker. They had no firearms. Tonker had asked for a pistol, but Nuth replied that the sound of a shot "would bring everything down on us," and no more was said about it.

Into the wood they went all day, deeper and deeper. They saw the skeleton of some early Georgian poacher nailed to a door in an oak tree; sometimes they saw a fairy scuttle away from them; once Tonker stepped heavily on a hard, dry stick, after which they both lay still for twenty minutes. And the sunset flared full of omens through the tree trunks, and night fell, and they came by fitful starlight, as Nuth had foreseen, to that lean, high house where the gnoles so secretly dwelt.

All was so silent by that unvalued house that the faded courage of Tonker flickered up, but to Nuth's experienced sense it seemed too silent; and all the while there was that look in the sky that was worse than a spoken doom, so that Nuth, as is often the case when men are in doubt, had leisure to fear the worst. Nevertheless he did not abandon the business, but sent the likely lad with the instruments of his trade by means of the ladder to the old green casement. And the moment that Tonker touched the withered boards, the silence that, though ominous, was earthly, became unearthly like the touch of a ghoul. And Tonker heard his breath offending against that silence, and his heart was like mad drums in a night attack, and a string of one of his sandals went tap on a rung of a ladder, and the leaves of the forest were mute, and the breeze of the night was still; and Tonker prayed that a mouse or a mole might make any noise at all, but not a creature stirred, even Nuth was still. And then and there, while yet he was undiscovered, the likely lad made up his mind, as he should have done long before, to leave those colossal emeralds where they were and have nothing further to do with the lean, high house of the gnoles, but to quit this sinister wood in the nick of time and retire from business at once and buy a place in the country. Then he descended softly and beckoned to Nuth. But the gnoles had watched him through knavish holes that they bore in trunks of the trees, and the unearthly silence gave way, as it were with a grace, to the rapid screams of Tonker as they picked him up from behind — screams that came faster and faster until they were incoherent. And where they took him it is not good to ask, and what they did with him I shall not say.

Nuth looked on for a while from the corner of the house with a mild surprise on his face as he rubbed his chin, for the trick of the holes in the

trees was new to him; then he stole nimbly away through the dreadful wood.

"And did they catch Nuth?" you ask me, gentle reader.

"Oh, no, my child" (for such a question is childish). "Nobody ever catches Nuth."

HOW ONE CAME, AS WAS FORETOLD, TO THE CITY OF NEVER

The child that played about the terraces and gardens in sight of the Surrey hills never knew that it was he that should come to the Ultimate City, never knew that he should see the Under Pits, the barbicans and the holy minarets of the mightiest city known. I think of him now as a child with a little red watering-can going about the gardens on a summer's day that lit the warm south country, his imagination delighted with all tales of quite little adventures, and all the while there was reserved for him that feat at which men wonder.

Looking in other directions, away from the Surrey hills, through all his infancy he saw that precipice that, wall above wall and mountain above mountain, stands at the edge of the World, and in perpetual twilight alone with the Moon and the Sun holds up the inconceivable City of Never. To tread its streets he was destined; prophecy knew it. He had the magic halter, and a worn old rope it was; an old wayfaring woman had given it to him: it had the power to hold any animal whose race had never known captivity, such as the unicorn, the hippogriff Pegasus, dragons and wyverns; but with a lion, giraffe, camel or horse it was useless.

How often we have seen that City of Never, that marvel of the Nations! Not when it is night in the World, and we can see no further than the stars; not when the sun is shining where we dwell, dazzling our eyes; but when the sun has set on some stormy days, all at once repentant at evening, and those glittering cliffs reveal themselves which we almost take to be clouds, and it is twilight with us as it is for ever with them, then on their gleaming summits we see those golden domes that overpeer the edges of the World and seem to dance with dignity and calm in that gentle light of evening that is Wonder's native haunt. Then does the City of Never, unvisited and afar, look long at her sister the World.

It had been prophecied that he should come there. They knew it when the pebbles were being made and before the isles of coral were given unto the sea. And thus the prophecy came unto fulfilment and passed into history, and so at length to Oblivion, out of which I drag it as it goes floating by, into which I shall one day tumble. The hippogriffs dance before dawn in the upper air; long before sunrise flashes upon our lawns they go to glitter in

light that has not yet come to the World, and as the dawn works up from the ragged hills and the stars feel it they go slanting earthwards, till sunlight touches the tops of the tallest trees, and the hippogriffs alight with a rattle of quills and fold their wings and gallop and gambol away till they come to some prosperous, wealthy, detestable town, and they leap at once from the fields and soar away from the sight of it, pursued by the horrible smoke of it until they come again to the pure blue air.

He whom prophecy had named from of old to come to the City of Never, went down one midnight with his magic halter to a lake-side where the hippogriffs alighted at dawn, for the turf was soft there and they could gallop far before they came to a town, and there he waited hidden near their hoofmarks. And the stars paled a little and grew indistinct; but there was no other sign as yet of the dawn, when there appeared far up in the deeps of the night two little saffron specks, then four and five: it was the hippogriffs dancing and twirling around in the sun. Another flock joined them, there were twelve of them now; they danced there, flashing their colours back to the sun, they descended in wide curves slowly; trees down on earth revealed against the sky, jet-black each delicate twig; a star disappeared from a cluster, now another; and dawn came on like music, like a new song. Ducks shot by to the lake from still dark fields of corn, far voices uttered, a colour grew upon water, and still the hippogriffs gloried in the light, revelling up in the sky; but when pigeons stirred on the branches and the first small bird was abroad, and little coots from the rushes ventured to peer about, then there came down on a sudden with a thunder of feathers the hippogriffs, and, as they landed from their celestial heights all bathed with the day's first sunlight, the man whose destiny it was as from of old to come to the City of Never, sprang up and caught the last with the magic halter. It plunged, but could not escape it, for the hippogriffs are of the uncaptured races, and magic has power over the magical, so the man mounted it, and it soared again for the heights whence it had come, as a wounded beast goes home. But when they came to the heights that venturous rider saw huge and fair to the left of him the destined City of Never, and he beheld the towers of Lel and Lek, Neerib and Akathooma, and the cliffs of Toldenarba a-glistening in the twilight like an alabaster statue of the Evening. Towards them he wrenched the halter, towards Toldenarba and the Under Pits; the wings of the hippogriff roared as the halter turned him. Of the Under Pits who shall tell? Their mystery is secret. It is held by some that they are the sources of

night, and that darkness pours from them at evening upon the world; while others hint that knowledge of these might undo our civilization.

There watched him ceaselessly from the Under Pits those eyes whose duty it is; from further within and deeper, the bats that dwell there arose when they saw the surprise in the eyes; the sentinels on the bulwarks beheld that stream of bats and lifted up their spears as it were for war. Nevertheless when they perceived that that war for which they watched was not now come upon them, they lowered their spears and suffered him to enter, and he passed whirring through the earthward gateway. Even so he came, as foretold, to the City of Never perched upon Toldenarba, and saw late twilight on those pinnacles that know no other light. All the domes were of copper, but the spires on their summits were gold. Little steps of onyx ran all this way and that. With cobbled agates were its streets a glory. Through small square panes of rose-quartz the citizens looked from their houses. To them as they looked abroad the World far-off seemed happy. Clad though that city was in one robe always, in twilight, yet was its beauty worthy of even so lovely a wonder: city and twilight were both peerless but for each other. Built of a stone unknown in the world we tread were its bastions, quarried we know not where, but called by the gnomes *abyx*, it so flashed back to the twilight its glories, colour for colour, that none can say of them where their boundary is, and which the eternal twilight, and which the City of Never; they are the twin-born children, the fairest daughters of Wonder. Time had been there, but not to work destruction; he had turned to a fair, pale green the domes that were made of copper, the rest he had left untouched, even he, the destroyer of cities, by what bribe I know not averted. Nevertheless they often wept in Never for change and passing away, mourning catastrophes in other worlds, and they built temples sometimes to ruined stars that had fallen flaming down from the Milky Way, giving them worship still when by us long since forgotten. Other temples they have — who knows to what divinities?

And he that was destined alone of men to come to the City of Never was well content to behold it as he trotted down its agate street, with the wings of his hippogriff furled, seeing at either side of him marvel on marvel of which even China is ignorant. Then as he neared the city's further rampart by which no inhabitant stirred, and looked in a direction to which no houses faced with any rose-pink windows, he suddenly saw far-off, dwarfing the mountains, an even greater city. Whether that city was built upon the

twilight or whether it rose from the coasts of some other world he did not know. He saw it dominate the City of Never, and strove to reach it; but at this unmeasured home of unknown colossi the hippogriff shied frantically, and neither the magic halter nor anything that he did could make the monster face it. At last, from the City of Never's lonely outskirts where no inhabitants walked, the rider turned slowly earthward. He knew now why all the windows faced this way — the denizens of the twilight gazed at the world and not at a greater than them. Then from the last step of the earthward stairway, like lead past the Under Pits and down the glittering face of Toldenarba, down from the overshadowed glories of the gold-tipped City of Never and out of perpetual twilight, swooped the man on his winged monster: the wind that slept at the time leaped up like a dog at their onrush, it uttered a cry and ran past them. Down on the World it was morning; night was roaming away with his cloak trailed behind him, white mists turned over and over as he went, the orb was grey but it glittered, lights blinked surprisingly in early windows, forth over wet, dim fields went cows from their houses: even in this hour touched the fields again the feet of the hippogriff. And the moment that the man dismounted and took off his magic halter the hippogriff flew slanting away with a whirr, going back to some airy dancing-place of his people.

And he that surmounted glittering Toldenarba and came alone of men to the City of Never has his name and his fame among nations; but he and the people of that twilit city well know two things unguessed by other men, they that there is another city fairer than theirs, and he — a deed unaccomplished.

THE CORONATION OF MR. THOMAS SHAP

It was the occupation of Mr. Thomas Shap to persuade customers that the goods were genuine and of an excellent quality, and that as regards the price their unspoken will was consulted. And in order to carry on this occupation he went by train very early every morning some few miles nearer to the City from the suburb in which he slept. This was the use to which he put his life.

From the moment when he first perceived (not as one reads a thing in a book, but as truths are revealed to one's instinct) the very beastliness of his occupation, and of the house that he slept in, its shape, make and pretensions, and even of the clothes that he wore; from that moment he withdrew his dreams from it, his fancies, his ambitions, everything in fact except that ponderable Mr. Shap that dressed in a frock-coat, bought tickets and handled money and could in turn be handled by the statistician. The priest's share in Mr. Shap, the share of the poet, never caught the early train to the City at all.

He used to take little flights of fancy at first, dwelt all day in his dreamy way on fields and rivers lying in the sunlight where it strikes the world more brilliantly further South. And then he began to imagine butterflies there; after that, silken people and the temples they built to their gods.

They noticed that he was silent, and even absent at times, but they found no fault with his behaviour with customers, to whom he remained as plausible as of old. So he dreamed for a year, and his fancy gained strength as he dreamed. He still read halfpenny papers in the train, still discussed the passing day's ephemeral topic, still voted at elections, though he no longer did these things with the whole Shap — his soul was no longer in them.

He had had a pleasant year, his imagination was all new to him still, and it had often discovered beautiful things away where it went, southeast at the edge of the twilight. And he had a matter-of-fact and logical mind, so that he often said, "Why should I pay my twopence at the electric theatre when I can see all sorts of things quite easily without?" Whatever he did was logical before anything else, and those that knew him always spoke of Shap as "a sound, sane, level-headed man."

On far the most important day of his life he went as usual to town by the early train to sell plausible articles to customers, while the spiritual Shap

roamed off to fanciful lands. As he walked from the station, dreamy but wide awake, it suddenly struck him that the real Shap was not the one walking to Business in black and ugly clothes, but he who roamed along a jungle's edge near the ramparts of an old and Eastern city that rose up sheer from the sand, and against which the desert lapped with one eternal wave. He used to fancy the name of that city was Larkar. "After all, the fancy is as real as the body," he said with perfect logic. It was a dangerous theory.

For that other life that he led he realized, as in Business, the importance and value of method. He did not let his fancy roam too far until it perfectly knew its first surroundings. Particularly he avoided the jungle — he was not afraid to meet a tiger there (after all it was not real), but stranger things might crouch there. Slowly he built up Larkar: rampart by rampart, towers for archers, gateway of brass, and all. And then one day he argued, and quite rightly, that all the silk-clad people in its streets, their camels, their wares that came from Inkustahn, the city itself, were all the things of his will — and then he made himself King. He smiled after that when people did not raise their hats to him in the street, as he walked from the station to Business; but he was sufficiently practical to recognize that it was better not to talk of this to those that only knew him as Mr. Shap.

Now that he was King in the city of Larkar and in all the desert that lay to the East and North he sent his fancy to wander further afield. He took the regiments of his camel-guards and went jingling out of Larkar, with little silver bells under the camels' chins, and came to other cities far-off on the yellow sand, with clear white walls and towers, uplifting themselves in the sun. Through their gates he passed with his three silken regiments, the light-blue regiment of the camel-guards being upon his right and the green regiment riding at his left, the lilac regiment going on before. When he had gone through the streets of any city and observed the ways of its people, and had seen the way that the sunlight struck its towers, he would proclaim himself King there, and then ride on in fancy. So he passed from city to city and from land to land. Clear-sighted though Mr. Shap was, I think he overlooked the lust of aggrandizement to which kings have so often been victims; and so it was that when the first few cities had opened their gleaming gates and he saw peoples prostrate before his camel, and spearmen cheering along countless balconies, and priests come out to do him reverence, he that had never had even the lowliest authority in the familiar world became unwisely insatiate. He let his fancy ride at inordinate

speed, he forsook method, scarce was he king of a land but he yearned to extend his borders; so he journeyed deeper and deeper into the wholly unknown. The concentration that he gave to this inordinate progress through countries of which history is ignorant and cities so fantastic in their bulwarks that, though their inhabitants were human, yet the foe that they feared seemed something less or more; the amazement with which he beheld gates and towers unknown even to art, and furtive people thronging intricate ways to acclaim him as their sovereign — all these things began to affect his capacity for Business. He knew as well as any that his fancy could not rule these beautiful lands unless that other Shap, however unimportant, were well sheltered and fed: and shelter and food meant money, and money, Business. His was more like the mistake of some gambler with cunning schemes who overlooks human greed. One day his fancy, riding in the morning, came to a city gorgeous as the sunrise, in whose opalescent wall were gates of gold, so huge that a river poured between the bars, floating in, when the gates were opened, large galleons under sail. Thence there came dancing out a company with instruments, and made a melody all around the wall; that morning Mr. Shap, the bodily Shap in London, forgot the train to town.

Until a year ago he had never imagined at all; it is not to be wondered at that all these things now newly seen by his fancy should play tricks at first with the memory of even so sane a man. He gave up reading the papers altogether, he lost all interest in politics, he cared less and less for things that were going on around him. This unfortunate missing of the morning train even occurred again, and the firm spoke to him severely about it. But he had his consolation. Were not Arathrion and Argun Zeerith and all the level coasts of Oora his? And even as the firm found fault with him his fancy watched the yaks on weary journeys, slow specks against the snow-fields, bringing tribute; and saw the green eyes of the mountain men who had looked at him strangely in the city of Nith when he had entered it by the desert door. Yet his logic did not forsake him; he knew well that his strange subjects did not exist, but he was prouder of having created them with his brain, than merely of ruling them only; thus in his pride he felt himself something more great than a king, he did not dare to think what! He went into the temple of the city of Zorra and stood some time there alone: all the priests kneeled to him when he came away.

He cared less and less for the things we care about, for the affairs of Shap, the business-man in London. He began to despise the man with a royal contempt.

One day when he sat in Sowla, the city of the Thuls, throned on one amethyst, he decided, and it was proclaimed on the moment by silver trumpets all along the land, that he would be crowned as king over all the lands of Wonder.

By that old temple where the Thuls were worshipped, year in, year out, for over a thousand years, they pitched pavilions in the open air. The trees that blew there threw out radiant scents unknown in any countries that know the map; the stars blazed fiercely for that famous occasion. A fountain hurled up, clattering, ceaselessly into the air armfuls on armfuls of diamonds. A deep hush waited for the golden trumpets, the holy coronation night was come. At the top of those old, worn steps, going down we know not whither, stood the king in the emerald-and-amethyst cloak, the ancient garb of the Thuls; beside him lay that Sphinx that for the last few weeks had advised him in his affairs.

Slowly, with music when the trumpets sounded, came up towards him from we know not where, one-hundred-and-twenty archbishops, twenty angels and two archangels, with that terrific crown, the diadem of the Thuls. They knew as they came up to him that promotion awaited them all because of this night's work. Silent, majestic, the king awaited them.

The doctors downstairs were sitting over their supper, the warders softly slipped from room to room, and when in that cosy dormitory of Hanwell they saw the king still standing erect and royal, his face resolute, they came up to him and addressed him:

"Go to bed," they said— "pretty bed." So he lay down and soon was fast asleep: the great day was over.

CHU-BU AND SHEEMISH

It was the custom on Tuesdays in the temple of Chu-bu for the priests to enter at evening and chant, “There is none but Chu-bu.”

And all the people rejoiced and cried out, “There is none but Chu-bu.” And honey was offered to Chu-bu, and maize and fat. Thus was he magnified.

Chu-bu was an idol of some antiquity, as may be seen from the colour of the wood. He had been carved out of mahogany, and after he was carved he had been polished. Then they had set him up on the diorite pedestal with the brazier in front of it for burning spices and the flat gold plates for fat. Thus they worshipped Chu-bu.

He must have been there for over a hundred years when one day the priests came in with another idol into the temple of Chu-bu, and set it up on a pedestal near Chu-bu’s and sang, “There is also Sheemish.”

And all the people rejoiced and cried out, “There is also Sheemish.”

Sheemish was palpably a modern idol, and although the wood was stained with a dark-red dye, you could see that he had only just been carved. And honey was offered to Sheemish as well as Chu-bu, and also maize and fat.

The fury of Chu-bu knew no time-limit: he was furious all that night, and next day he was furious still. The situation called for immediate miracles. To devastate the city with a pestilence and kill all his priests was scarcely within his power, therefore he wisely concentrated such divine powers as he had in commanding a little earthquake. “Thus,” thought Chu-bu, “will I reassert myself as the only god, and men shall spit upon Sheemish.”

Chu-bu willed it and willed it and still no earthquake came, when suddenly he was aware that the hated Sheemish was daring to attempt a miracle too. He ceased to busy himself about the earthquake and listened, or shall I say felt, for what Sheemish was thinking; for gods are aware of what passes in the mind by a sense that is other than any of our five. Sheemish was trying to make an earthquake too.

The new god’s motive was probably to assert himself. I doubt if Chu-bu understood or cared for his motive; it was sufficient for an idol already aflame with jealousy that his detestable rival was on the verge of a miracle. All the power of Chu-bu veered round at once and set dead against an

earthquake, even a little one. It was thus in the temple of Chu-bu for some time, and then no earthquake came.

To be a god and to fail to achieve a miracle is a despairing sensation; it is as though among men one should determine upon a hearty sneeze and as though no sneeze should come; it is as though one should try to swim in heavy boots or remember a name that is utterly forgotten: all these pains were Sheemish's.

And upon Tuesday the priests came in, and the people, and they did worship Chu-bu and offered fat to him, saying, "O Chu-bu who made everything," and then the priests sang, "There is also Sheemish"; and Chu-bu was put to shame and spake not for three days.

Now there were holy birds in the temple of Chu-bu, and when the third day was come and the night thereof, it was as it were revealed to the mind of Chu-bu, that there was dirt upon the head of Sheemish.

And Chu-bu spake unto Sheemish as speak the gods, moving no lips nor yet disturbing the silence, saying, "There is dirt upon thy head, O Sheemish." All night long he muttered again and again, "there is dirt upon Sheemish's head." And when it was dawn and voices were heard far off, Chu-bu became exultant with Earth's awakening things, and cried out till the sun was high, "Dirt, dirt, dirt, upon the head of Sheemish," and at noon he said, "So Sheemish would be a god." Thus was Sheemish confounded.

And with Tuesday one came and washed his head with rose-water, and he was worshipped again when they sang "There is also Sheemish." And yet was Chu-bu content, for he said, "The head of Sheemish has been defiled," and again, "His head was defiled, it is enough." And one evening lo! there was dirt on the head of Chu-bu also, and the thing was perceived of Sheemish.

It is not with the gods as it is with men. We are angry one with another and turn from our anger again, but the wrath of the gods is enduring. Chu-bu remembered and Sheemish did not forget. They spake as we do not speak, in silence yet heard of each other, nor were their thoughts as our thoughts. We should not judge them merely by human standards. All night long they spake and all night said these words only: "Dirty Chu-bu," "Dirty Sheemish." "Dirty Chu-bu," "Dirty Sheemish," all night long. Their wrath had not tired at dawn, and neither had wearied of his accusation. And gradually Chu-bu came to realize that he was nothing more than the equal of Sheemish. All gods are jealous, but this equality with the upstart

Sheemish, a thing of painted wood a hundred years newer than Chu-bu, and this worship given to Sheemish in Chu-bu's own temple, were particularly bitter. Chu-bu was jealous even for a god; and when Tuesday came again, the third day of Sheemish's worship, Chu-bu could bear it no longer. He felt that his anger must be revealed at all costs, and he returned with all the vehemence of his will to achieving a little earthquake. The worshippers had just gone from his temple when Chu-bu settled his will to attain this miracle. Now and then his meditations were disturbed by that now familiar dictum, "Dirty Chu-bu," but Chu-bu willed ferociously, not even stopping to say what he longed to say and had already said nine hundred times, and presently even these interruptions ceased.

They ceased because Sheemish had returned to a project that he had never definitely abandoned, the desire to assert himself and exalt himself over Chu-bu by performing a miracle, and the district being volcanic he had chosen a little earthquake as the miracle most easily accomplished by a small god.

Now an earthquake that is commanded by two gods has double the chance of fulfilment than when it is willed by one, and an incalculably greater chance than when two gods are pulling different ways; as, to take the case of older and greater gods, when the sun and the moon pull in the same direction we have the biggest tides.

Chu-bu knew nothing of the theory of tides, and was too much occupied with his miracle to notice what Sheemish was doing. And suddenly the miracle was an accomplished thing.

It was a very local earthquake, for there are other gods than Chu-bu or even Sheemish, and it was only a little one as the gods had willed, but it loosened some monoliths in a colonnade that supported one side of the temple and the whole of one wall fell in, and the low huts of the people of that city were shaken a little and some of their doors were jammed so that they would not open; it was enough, and for a moment it seemed that it was all; neither Chu-bu nor Sheemish commanded there should be more, but they had set in motion an old law older than Chu-bu, the law of gravity that that colonnade had held back for a hundred years, and the temple of Chu-bu quivered and then stood still, swayed once and was overthrown, on the heads of Chu-bu and Sheemish.

No one rebuilt it, for nobody dared to near such terrible gods. Some said that Chu-bu wrought the miracle, but some said Sheemish, and thereof

schism was born. The weakly amiable, alarmed by the bitterness of rival sects, sought compromise and said that both had wrought it, but no one guessed the truth that the thing was done in rivalry.

And a saying arose, and both sects held this belief in common, that whoso toucheth Chu-bu shall die or whoso looketh upon Sheemish.

That is how Chu-bu came into my possession when I travelled once beyond the hills of Ting. I found him in the fallen temple of Chu-bu with his hands and toes sticking up out of the rubbish, lying upon his back, and in that attitude just as I found him I keep him to this day on my mantlepiece, as he is less liable to be upset that way. Sheemish was broken, so I left him where he was.

And there is something so helpless about Chu-bu with his fat hands stuck up in the air that sometimes I am moved out of compassion to bow down to him and pray, saying, “O Chu-bu, thou that made everything, help thy servant.”

Chu-bu cannot do much, though once I am sure that at a game of bridge he sent me the ace of trumps after I had not held a card worth having for the whole of the evening. And chance alone could have done as much as that for me. But I do not tell this to Chu-bu.

THE WONDERFUL WINDOW

The old man in the Oriental-looking robe was being moved on by the police, and it was this that attracted to him and the parcel under his arm the attention of Mr. Sladden, whose livelihood was earned in the emporium of Messrs. Mergin and Chater, that is to say in their establishment.

Mr. Sladden had the reputation of being the silliest young man in Business; a touch of romance — a mere suggestion of it — would send his eyes gazing away as though the walls of the emporium were of gossamer and London itself a myth, instead of attending to customers.

Merely the fact that the dirty piece of paper that wrapped the old man's parcel was covered with Arabic writing was enough to give Mr. Sladden the idea of romance, and he followed until the little crowd fell off and the stranger stopped by the kerb and unwrapped his parcel and prepared to sell the thing that was inside it. It was a little window in old wood with small panes set in lead; it was not much more than a foot in breadth and was under two feet long. Mr. Sladden had never before seen a window sold in the street, so he asked the price of it.

"Its price is all you possess," said the old man.

"Where did you get it?" said Mr. Sladden, for it was a strange window.

"I gave all that I possessed for it in the streets of Baghdad."

"Did you possess much?" said Mr. Sladden.

"I had all that I wanted," he said, "except this window."

"It must be a good window," said the young man.

"It is a magical window," said the old one.

"I have only ten shillings on me, but I have fifteen-and-six at home."

The old man thought for a while.

"Then twenty-five-and-sixpence is the price of the window," he said.

It was only when the bargain was completed and the ten shillings paid and the strange old man was coming for his fifteen-and-six and to fit the magical window into his only room that it occurred to Mr. Sladden's mind that he did not want a window. And then they were at the door of the house in which he rented a room, and it seemed too late to explain.

The stranger demanded privacy when he fitted up the window, so Mr. Sladden remained outside the door at the top of a little flight of creaky stairs. He heard no sound of hammering.

And presently the strange old man came out with his faded yellow robe and his great beard, and his eyes on far-off places. “It is finished,” he said, and he and the young man parted. And whether he remained a spot of colour and an anachronism in London, or whether he ever came again to Baghdad, and what dark hands kept on the circulation of his twenty-five-and-six, Mr. Sladden never knew.

Mr. Sladden entered the bare-boarded room in which he slept and spent all his indoor hours between closing-time and the hour at which Messrs. Mergin and Chater commenced. To the Penates of so dingy a room his neat frock-coat must have been a continual wonder. Mr. Sladden took it off and folded it carefully; and there was the old man’s window rather high up in the wall. There had been no window in that wall hitherto, nor any ornament at all but a small cupboard, so when Mr. Sladden had put his frock-coat safely away he glanced through his new window. It was where his cupboard had been in which he kept his tea-things: they were all standing on the table now. When Mr. Sladden glanced through his new window it was late in a summer’s evening; the butterflies some while ago would have closed their wings, though the bat would scarcely yet be drifting abroad — but this was in London: the shops were shut and street-lamps not yet lighted.

Mr. Sladden rubbed his eyes, then rubbed the window, and still he saw a sky of blazing blue, and far, far down beneath him, so that no sound came up from it or smoke of chimneys, a mediaeval city set with towers; brown roofs and cobbled streets, and then white walls and buttresses, and beyond them bright green fields and tiny streams. On the towers archers lolled, and along the walls were pikemen, and now and then a wagon went down some old-world street and lumbered through the gateway and out to the country, and now and then a wagon drew up to the city from the mist that was rolling with evening over the fields. Sometimes folks put their heads out of lattice windows, sometimes some idle troubadour seemed to sing, and nobody hurried or troubled about anything. Airy and dizzy though the distance was, for Mr. Sladden seemed higher above the city than any cathedral gargoyle, yet one clear detail he obtained as a clue: the banners floating from every tower over the idle archers had little golden dragons all over a pure white field.

He heard motor-buses roar by his other window, he heard the newsboys howling.

Mr. Sladden grew dreamier than ever after that on the premises, in the establishment of Messrs. Mergin and Chater. But in one matter he was wise and wakeful: he made continuous and careful inquiries about the golden dragons on a white flag, and talked to no one of his wonderful window. He came to know the flags of every king in Europe, he even dabbled in history, he made inquiries at shops that understood heraldry, but nowhere could he learn any trace of little dragons *or* on a field *argent*. And when it seemed that for him alone those golden dragons had fluttered he came to love them as an exile in some desert might love the lilies of his home or as a sick man might love swallows when he cannot easily live to another spring.

As soon as Messrs. Mergin and Chater closed, Mr. Sladden used to go back to his dingy room and gaze though the wonderful window until it grew dark in the city and the guard would go with a lantern round the ramparts and the night came up like velvet, full of strange stars. Another clue he tried to obtain one night by jotting down the shapes of the constellations, but this led him no further, for they were unlike any that shone upon either hemisphere.

Each day as soon as he woke he went first to the wonderful window, and there was the city, diminutive in the distance, all shining in the morning, and the golden dragons dancing in the sun, and the archers stretching themselves or swinging their arms on the tops of the windy towers. The window would not open, so that he never heard the songs that the troubadours sang down there beneath the gilded balconies; he did not even hear the belfries' chimes, though he saw the jack-daws routed every hour from their homes. And the first thing that he always did was to cast his eye round all the little towers that rose up from the ramparts to see that the little golden dragons were flying there on their flags. And when he saw them flaunting themselves on white folds from every tower against the marvelous deep blue of the sky he dressed contentedly, and, taking one last look, went off to his work with a glory in his mind. It would have been difficult for the customers of Messrs. Mergin and Chater to guess the precise ambition of Mr. Sladden as he walked before them in his neat frock-coat: it was that he might be a man-at-arms or an archer in order to fight for the little golden dragons that flew on a white flag for an unknown king in an inaccessible city. At first Mr. Sladden used to walk round and round the mean street that he lived in, but he gained no clue from that; and soon he noticed that quite

different winds blew below his wonderful window from those that blew on the other side of the house.

In August the evenings began to grow shorter: this was the very remark that the other employees made to him at the emporium, so that he almost feared that they suspected his secret, and he had much less time for the wonderful window, for lights were few down there and they blinked out early.

One morning late in August, just before he went to Business, Mr. Sladden saw a company of pikemen running down the cobbled road towards the gateway of the mediaeval city — Golden Dragon City he used to call it alone in his own mind, but he never spoke of it to anyone. The next thing that he noticed was that the archers were handling round bundles of arrows in addition to the quivers which they wore. Heads were thrust out of windows more than usual, a woman ran out and called some children indoors, a knight rode down the street, and then more pikemen appeared along the walls, and all the jack-daws were in the air. In the street no troubadour sang. Mr. Sladden took one look along the towers to see that the flags were flying, and all the golden dragons were streaming in the wind. Then he had to go to Business. He took a bus back that evening and ran upstairs. Nothing seemed to be happening in Golden Dragon City except a crowd in the cobbled street that led down to the gateway; the archers seemed to be reclining as usual lazily in their towers, and then a white flag went down with all its golden dragons; he did not see at first that all the archers were dead. The crowd was pouring towards him, towards the precipitous wall from which he looked; men with a white flag covered with golden dragons were moving backwards slowly, men with another flag were pressing them, a flag on which there was one huge red bear. Another banner went down upon a tower. Then he saw it all: the golden dragons were being beaten — his little golden dragons. The men of the bear were coming under the window; what ever he threw from that height would fall with terrific force: fire-irons, coal, his clock, whatever he had — he would fight for his little golden dragons yet. A flame broke out from one of the towers and licked the feet of a reclining archer; he did not stir. And now the alien standard was out of sight directly underneath. Mr. Sladden broke the panes of the wonderful window and wrenched away with a poker the lead that held them. Just as the glass broke he saw a banner covered with golden dragons fluttering still, and then as he drew back to hurl the poker there

came to him the scent of mysterious spices, and there was nothing there, not even the daylight, for behind the fragments of the wonderful window was nothing but that small cupboard in which he kept his tea-things.

And though Mr. Sladden is older now and knows more of the world, and even has a Business of his own, he has never been able to buy such another window, and has not ever since, either from books or men, heard any rumour at all of Golden Dragon City.

EPILOGUE

Here the fourteenth Episode of the Book of Wonder endeth and here the relating of the Chronicles of Little Adventures at the Edge of the World. I take farewell of my readers. But it may be we shall even meet again, for it is still to be told how the gnomes robbed the fairies, and of the vengeance that the fairies took, and how even the gods themselves were troubled thereby in their sleep; and how the King of Ool insulted the troubadours, thinking himself safe among his scores of archers and hundreds of halberdiers, and how the troubadours stole to his towers by night, and under his battlements by the light of the moon made that king ridiculous for ever in song. But for this I must first return to the Edge of the World. Behold, the caravans start.

FIFTY-ONE TALES



OR, THE FOOD OF DEATH

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THE ASSIGNATION

Fame singing in the highways, and trifling as she sang, with sordid adventurers, passed the poet by.

And still the poet made for her little chaplets of song, to deck her forehead in the courts of Time: and still she wore instead the worthless garlands, that boisterous citizens flung to her in the ways, made out of perishable things.

And after a while whenever these garlands died the poet came to her with his chaplets of song; and still she laughed at him and wore the worthless wreaths, though they always died at evening.

And one day in his bitterness the poet rebuked her, and said to her: “Lovely Fame, even in the highways and the byways you have not foreborne to laugh and shout and jest with worthless men, and I have toiled for you and dreamed of you and you mock me and pass me by.”

And Fame turned her back on him and walked away, but in departing she looked over her shoulder and smiled at him as she had not smiled before, and, almost speaking in a whisper, said:

“I will meet you in the graveyard at the back of the Workhouse in a hundred years.”

CHARON

Charon leaned forward and rowed. All things were one with his weariness.

It was not with him a matter of years or of centuries, but of wide floods of time, and an old heaviness and a pain in the arms that had become for him part of the scheme that the gods had made and was of a piece with Eternity.

If the gods had even sent him a contrary wind it would have divided all time in his memory into two equal slabs.

So grey were all things always where he was that if any radiance lingered a moment among the dead, on the face of such a queen perhaps as Cleopatra, his eyes could not have perceived it.

It was strange that the dead nowadays were coming in such numbers. They were coming in thousands where they used to come in fifties. It was neither Charon's duty nor his wont to ponder in his grey soul why these things might be. Charon leaned forward and rowed.

Then no one came for a while. It was not usual for the gods to send no one down from Earth for such a space. But the gods knew best.

Then one man came alone. And the little shade sat shivering on a lonely bench and the great boat pushed off. Only one passenger: the gods knew best. And great and weary Charon rowed on and on beside the little, silent, shivering ghost.

And the sound of the river was like a mighty sigh that Grief in the beginning had sighed among her sisters, and that could not die like the echoes of human sorrow failing on earthly hills, but was as old as time and the pain in Charon's arms.

Then the boat from the slow, grey river loomed up to the coast of Dis and the little, silent shade still shivering stepped ashore, and Charon turned the boat to go wearily back to the world. Then the little shadow spoke, that had been a man.

"I am the last," he said.

No one had ever made Charon smile before, no one before had ever made him weep.

THE DEATH OF PAN

When the travellers from London entered Arcady they lamented one to another the death of Pan.

And anon they saw him lying stiff and still.

Horned Pan was still and the dew was on his fur; he had not the look of a live animal. And then they said, “It is true that Pan is dead.”

And, standing melancholy by that huge prone body, they looked for long at memorable Pan.

And evening came and a small star appeared.

And presently from a hamlet of some Arcadian valley, with a sound of idle song, Arcadian maidens came.

And, when they saw there, suddenly in the twilight, that old recumbent god, they stopped in their running and whispered among themselves. “How silly he looks,” they said, and thereat they laughed a little.

And at the sound of their laughter Pan leaped up and the gravel flew from his hooves.

And, for as long as the travellers stood and listened, the crags and the hill-tops of Arcady rang with the sounds of pursuit.

THE SPHINX AT GIZEH

I saw the other day the Sphinx's painted face.

She had painted her face in order to ogle Time.

And he has spared no other painted face in all the world but hers.

Delilah was younger than she, and Delilah is dust. Time hath loved nothing but this worthless painted face.

I do not care that she is ugly, nor that she has painted her face, so that she only lure his secret from Time.

Time dallies like a fool at her feet when he should be smiting cities.

Time never wearies of her silly smile.

There are temples all about her that he has forgotten to spoil.

I saw an old man go by, and Time never touched him.

Time that has carried away the seven gates of Thebes!

She has tried to bind him with ropes of eternal sand, she had hoped to oppress him with the Pyramids.

He lies there in the sand with his foolish hair all spread about her paws.

If she ever finds his secret we will put out his eyes, so that he shall find no more our beautiful things — there are lovely gates in Florence that I fear he will carry away.

We have tried to bind him with song and with old customs, but they only held him for a little while, and he has always smitten us and mocked us.

When he is blind he shall dance to us and make sport.

Great clumsy time shall stumble and dance, who liked to kill little children, and can hurt even the daisies no longer.

Then shall our children laugh at him who slew Babylon's winged bulls, and smote great numbers of the gods and fairies — when he is shorn of his hours and his years.

We will shut him up in the Pyramid of Cheops, in the great chamber where the sarcophagus is. Thence we will lead him out when we give our feasts. He shall ripen our corn for us and do menial work.

We will kiss they painted face, O Sphinx, if thou wilt betray to us Time.

And yet I fear that in his ultimate anguish he may take hold blindly of the world and the moon, and slowly pull down upon him the House of Man.

THE HEN

All along the farmyard gables the swallows sat a-row, twittering uneasily to one another, telling of many things, but thinking only of Summer and the South, for Autumn was afoot and the North wind waiting.

And suddenly one day they were all quite gone. And everyone spoke of the swallows and the South.

"I think I shall go South myself next year," said a hen.

And the year wore on and the swallows came again, and the year wore on and they sat again on the gables, and all the poultry discussed the departure of the hen.

And very early one morning, the wind being from the North, the swallows all soared suddenly and felt the wind in their wings; and a strength came upon them and a strange old knowledge and a more than human faith, and flying high they left the smoke of our cities and small remembered eaves, and saw at last the huge and homeless sea, and steering by grey sea-currents went southward with the wind. And going South they went by glittering fog-banks and saw old islands lifting their heads above them; they saw the slow quests of the wandering ships, and divers seeking pearls, and lands at war, till there came in view the mountains that they sought and the sight of the peaks they knew; and they descended into an austral valley, and saw Summer sometimes sleeping and sometimes singing song.

"I think the wind is about right," said the hen; and she spread her wings and ran out of the poultry-yard. And she ran fluttering out on to the road and some way down it until she came to a garden.

At evening she came back panting.

And in the poultry-yard she told the poultry how she had gone South as far as the high road, and saw the great world's traffic going by, and came to lands where the potato grew, and saw the stubble upon which men live, and at the end of the road had found a garden, and there were roses in it — beautiful roses! — and the gardener himself was there with his braces on.

"How extremely interesting," the poultry said, "and what a really beautiful description!"

And the Winter wore away, and the bitter months went by, and the Spring of the year appeared, and the swallows came again.

"We have been to the South," they said, "and the valleys beyond the sea."

But the poultry would not agree that there was a sea in the South: "You should hear our hen," they said.

WIND AND FOG

“Way for us,” said the North Wind as he came down the sea on an errand of old Winter.

And he saw before him the grey silent fog that lay along the tides.

“Way for us,” said the North Wind, “O ineffectual fog, for I am Winter’s leader in his age-old war with the ships. I overwhelm them suddenly in my strength, or drive upon them the huge seafaring bergs. I cross an ocean while you move a mile. There is mourning in inland places when I have met the ships. I drive them upon the rocks and feed the sea. Wherever I appear they bow to our lord the Winter.”

And to his arrogant boasting nothing said the fog. Only he rose up slowly and trailed away from the sea and, crawling up long valleys, took refuge among the hills; and night came down and everything was still, and the fog began to mumble in the stillness. And I heard him telling infamously to himself the tale of his horrible spoils. “A hundred and fifteen galleons of old Spain, a certain argosy that went from Tyre, eight fisher-fleets and ninety ships of the line, twelve warships under sail, with their carronades, three hundred and eighty-seven river-craft, forty-two merchantmen that carried spice, four quinquiremes, ten triremes, thirty yachts, twenty-one battleships of the modern time, nine thousand admirals….” he mumbled and chuckled on, till I suddenly arose and fled from his fearful contamination.

THE RAFT-BUILDERS

All we who write put me in mind of sailors hastily making rafts upon doomed ships.

When we break up under the heavy years and go down into eternity with all that is ours our thoughts like small lost rafts float on awhile upon Oblivion's sea. They will not carry much over those tides, our names and a phrase or two and little else.

They that write as a trade to please the whim of the day, they are like sailors that work at the rafts only to warm their hands and to distract their thoughts from their certain doom; their rafts go all to pieces before the ship breaks up.

See now Oblivion shimmering all around us, its very tranquility deadlier than tempest. How little all our keels have troubled it. Time in its deeps swims like a monstrous whale; and, like a whale, feeds on the littlest things — small tunes and little unskilled songs of the olden, golden evenings — and anon turneth whale-like to overthrow whole ships.

See now the wreckage of Babylon floating idly, and something there that once was Nineveh; already their kings and queens are in the deeps among the weedy masses of old centuries that hide the sodden bulk of sunken Tyre and make a darkness round Persepolis.

For the rest I dimly see the forms of foundered ships on the sea-floor strewn with crowns.

Our ships were all unseaworthy from the first.

There goes the raft that Homer made for Helen.

THE WORKMAN

I saw a workman fall with his scaffolding right from the summit of some vast hotel. And as he came down I saw him holding a knife and trying to cut his name on the scaffolding. He had time to try and do this for he must have had nearly three hundred feet to fall. And I could think of nothing but his folly in doing this futile thing, for not only would the man be unrecognizably dead in three seconds, but the very pole on which he tried to scratch whatever of his name he had time for was certain to be burnt in a few weeks for firewood.

Then I went home for I had work to do. And all that evening I thought of the man's folly, till the thought hindered me from serious work.

And late that night while I was still at work, the ghost of the workman floated through my wall and stood before me laughing.

I heard no sound until after I spoke to it; but I could see the grey diaphanous form standing before me shuddering with laughter.

I spoke at last and asked what it was laughing at, and then the ghost spoke. It said: "I'm a laughin' at you sittin' and workin' there."

"And why," I asked, "do you laugh at serious work?"

"Why, yer bloomin' life 'ull go by like a wind," he said, "and yer 'ole silly civilization 'ull be tidied up in a few centuries."

Then he fell to laughing again and this time audibly; and, laughing still, faded back through the wall again and into the eternity from which he had come.

THE GUEST

A young man came into an ornate restaurant at eight o'clock in London.

He was alone, but two places had been laid at the table which was reserved for him. He had chosen the dinner very carefully, by letter a week before.

A waiter asked him about the other guest.

"You probably won't see him till the coffee comes," the young man told him; so he was served alone.

Those at adjacent tables might have noticed the young man continually addressing the empty chair and carrying on a monologue with it throughout his elaborate dinner.

"I think you knew my father," he said to it over the soup.

"I sent for you this evening," he continued, "because I want you to do me a good turn; in fact I must insist on it."

There was nothing eccentric about the man except for this habit of addressing an empty chair, certainly he was eating as good a dinner as any sane man could wish for.

After the Burgundy had been served he became more voluble in his monologue, not that he spoiled his wine by drinking excessively.

"We have several acquaintances in common," he said. "I met King Seti a year ago in Thebes. I think he has altered very little since you knew him. I thought his forehead a little low for a king's. Cheops has left the house that he built for your reception, he must have prepared for you for years and years. I suppose you have seldom been entertained like that. I ordered this dinner over a week ago. I thought then that a lady might have come with me, but as she wouldn't I've asked you. She may not after all be as lovely as Helen of Troy. Was Helen very lovely? Not when you knew her, perhaps. You were lucky in Cleopatra, you must have known her when she was in her prime.

"You never knew the mermaids nor the fairies nor the lovely goddesses of long ago, that's where we have the best of you."

He was silent when the waiters came to his table, but rambled merrily on as soon as they left, still turned to the empty chair.

“You know I saw you here in London only the other day. You were on a motor bus going down Ludgate Hill. It was going much too fast. London is a good place. But I shall be glad enough to leave it. It was in London that I met the lady I that was speaking about. If it hadn’t been for London I probably shouldn’t have met her, and if it hadn’t been for London she probably wouldn’t have had so much besides me to amuse her. It cuts both ways.”

He paused once to order coffee, gazing earnestly at the waiter and putting a sovereign in his hand. “Don’t let it be chicory,” said he.

The waiter brought the coffee, and the young man dropped a tabloid of some sort into his cup.

“I don’t suppose you come here very often,” he went on. “Well, you probably want to be going. I haven’t taken you much out of your way, there is plenty for you to do in London.”

Then having drunk his coffee he fell on to the floor by a foot of the empty chair, and a doctor who was dining in the room bent over him and announced to the anxious manager the visible presence of the young man’s guest.

DEATH AND ODYSSEUS

In the Olympian courts Love laughed at Death, because he was unsightly, and because She couldn't help it, and because he never did anything worth doing, and because She would.

And Death hated being laughed at, and used to brood apart thinking only of his wrongs and of what he could do to end this intolerable treatment.

But one day Death appeared in the courts with an air and They all noticed it. "What are you up to now?" said Love. And Death with some solemnity said to Her: "I am going to frighten Odysseus"; and drawing about him his grey traveller's cloak went out through the windy door with his jowl turned earthwards.

And he came soon to Ithaca and the hall that Athene knew, and opened the door and saw there famous Odysseus, with his white locks bending close over the fire, trying to warm his hands.

And the wind through the open door blew bitterly on Odysseus.

And Death came up behind him, and suddenly shouted.

And Odysseus went on warming his pale hands.

Then Death came close and began to mouth at him. And after a while Odysseus turned and spoke. And "Well, old servant," he said, "have your masters been kind to you since I made you work for me round Ilion?"

And Death for some while stood mute, for he thought of the laughter of Love.

Then "Come now," said Odysseus, "lend me your shoulder," and he leaning heavily on that bony joint, they went together through the open door.

DEATH AND THE ORANGE

Two dark young men in a foreign southern land sat at a restaurant table with one woman.

And on the woman's plate was a small orange which had an evil laughter in its heart.

And both of the men would be looking at the woman all the time, and they ate little and they drank much.

And the woman was smiling equally at each.

Then the small orange that had the laughter in its heart rolled slowly off the plate on to the floor. And the dark young men both sought for it at once, and they met suddenly beneath the table, and soon they were speaking swift words to one another, and a horror and an impotence came over the Reason of each as she sat helpless at the back of the mind, and the heart of the orange laughed and the woman went on smiling; and Death, who was sitting at another table, tête-à-tête with an old man, rose and came over to listen to the quarrel.

THE PRAYER OF THE FLOWERS

It was the voice of the flowers on the West wind, the lovable, the old, the lazy West wind, blowing ceaselessly, blowing sleepily, going Greecewards.

"The woods have gone away, they have fallen and left us; men love us no longer, we are lonely by moonlight. Great engines rush over the beautiful fields, their ways lie hard and terrible up and down the land.

"The cancrous cities spread over the grass, they clatter in their lairs continually, they glitter about us blemishing the night.

"The woods are gone, O Pan, the woods, the woods. And thou art far, O Pan, and far away."

I was standing by night between two railway embankments on the edge of a Midland city. On one of them I saw the trains go by, once in every two minutes, and on the other, the trains went by twice in every five.

Quite close were the glaring factories, and the sky above them wore the fearful look that it wears in dreams of fever.

The flowers were right in the stride of that advancing city, and thence I heard them sending up their cry. And then I heard, beating musically up wind, the voice of Pan reproving them from Arcady —

"Be patient a little, these things are not for long."

TIME AND THE TRADESMAN

Once Time as he prowled the world, his hair grey not with weakness but with dust of the ruin of cities, came to a furniture shop and entered the Antique department. And there he saw a man darkening the wood of a chair with dye and beating it with chains and making imitation wormholes in it.

And when Time saw another doing his work he stood by him awhile and looked on critically.

And at last he said: “That is not how I work,” and he turned the man’s hair white and bent his back and put some furrows in his little cunning face; then turned and strode away, for a mighty city that was weary and sick and too long had troubled the fields was sore in need of him.

THE LITTLE CITY

I was in the pre-destined 11.8 from Goraghwood to Drogheda, when I suddenly saw the city. It was a little city in a valley, and only seemed to have a little smoke, and the sun caught the smoke and turned it golden, so that it looked like an old Italian picture where angels walk in the foreground and the rest is a blaze of gold. And beyond, as one could tell by the lie of land although one could not see through the golden smoke, I knew that there lay the paths of the roving ships.

All round there lay a patchwork of small fields all over the slopes of the hills, and the snow had come upon them tentatively, but already the birds of the waste had moved to the sheltered places for every omen boded more to fall. Far away some little hills blazed like an aureate bulwark broken off by age and fallen from the earthward rampart of Paradise. And aloof and dark the mountains stared unconcernedly seawards.

And when I saw those grey and watchful mountains sitting where they sat while the cities of the civilization of Araby and Asia arose like crocuses, and like crocuses fell, I wondered for how long there would be smoke in the valley and little fields on the hills.

THE UNPASTURABLE FIELDS

Thus spake the mountains: “Behold us, even us; the old ones, the grey ones, that wear the feet of Time. Time on our rocks shall break his staff and stumble: and still we shall sit majestic, even as now, hearing the sound of the sea, our old coeval sister, who nurses the bones of her children and weeps for the things she has done.

“Far, far, we stand above all things; befriending the little cities until they grow old and leave us to go among the myths.

“We are the most imperishable mountains.”

And softly the clouds foregathered from far places, and crag on crag and mountain upon mountain in the likeness of Caucasus upon Himalaya came riding past the sunlight upon the backs of storms and looked down idly from their golden heights upon the crests of the mountains.

“Ye pass away,” said the mountains.

And the clouds answered, as I dreamed or fancied,

“We pass away, indeed we pass away, but upon our unpasturable fields Pegasus prances. Here Pegasus gallops and browses upon song which the larks bring to him every morning from far terrestrial fields. His hoof-beats ring upon our slopes at sunrise as though our fields were of silver. And breathing the dawn-wind in dilated nostrils, with head tossed upwards and with quivering wings, he stands and stares from our tremendous heights, and snorts and sees far-future wonderful wars rage in the creases and the folds of the togas that cover the knees of the gods.”

THE WORM AND THE ANGEL

As he crawled from the tombs of the fallen a worm met with an angel.

And together they looked upon the kings and kingdoms, and youths and maidens and the cities of men. They saw the old men heavy in their chairs and heard the children singing in the fields. They saw far wars and warriors and walled towns, wisdom and wickedness, and the pomp of kings, and the people of all the lands that the sunlight knew.

And the worm spake to the angel saying: “Behold my food.”

“Be dakeon para Thina poluphloisboio Thalassaes,” murmured the angel, for they walked by the sea, “and can you destroy that too?”

And the worm paled in his anger to a greyness ill to behold, for for three thousand years he had tried to destroy that line and still its melody was ringing in his head.

THE SONGLESS COUNTRY

The poet came unto a great country in which there were no songs. And he lamented gently for the nation that had not any little foolish songs to sing to itself at evening.

And at last he said: “I will make for them myself some little foolish songs so that they may be merry in the lanes and happy by the fireside.” And for some days he made for them aimless songs such as maidens sing on the hills in the older happier countries.

Then he went to some of that nation as they sat weary with the work of the day and said to them: “I have made you some aimless songs out of the small unreasonable legends, that are somewhat akin to the wind in the vales of my childhood; and you may care to sing them in your disconsolate evenings.”

And they said to him:

“If you think we have time for that sort of nonsense nowadays you cannot know much of the progress of modern commerce.”

And then the poet wept for he said: “Alas! They are damned.”

THE LATEST THING

I saw an unclean-feeder by the banks of the river of Time. He crouched by orchards numerous with apples in a happy land of flowers; colossal barns stood near which the ancients had stored with grain, and the sun was golden on serene far hills behind the level lands. But his back was to all these things. He crouched and watched the river. And whatever the river chanced to send him down the unclean-feeder clutched at greedily with his arms, wading out into the water.

Now there were in those days, and indeed still are, certain uncleanly cities upon the river of Time; and from them fearfully nameless things came floating shapelessly by. And whenever the odor of these came down the river before them the unclean-feeder plunged into the dirty water and stood far out, expectant. And if he opened his mouth one saw these things on his lips.

Indeed from the upper reaches there came down sometimes the fallen rhododendron's petal, sometimes a rose; but they were useless to the unclean-feeder, and when he saw them he growled.

A poet walked beside the river's bank; his head was lifted and his look was afar; I think he saw the sea, and the hills of Fate from which the river ran. I saw the unclean-feeder standing voracious, up to his waist in that evil-smelling river.

"Look," I said to the poet.

"The current will sweep him away," the poet said.

"But those cities that poison the river," I said to him.

He answered: "Whenever the centuries melt on the hills of Fate the river terribly floods."

THE DEMAGOGUE AND THE DEMI-MONDE

A demagogue and a demi-mondaine chanced to arrive together at the gate of Paradise. And the Saint looked sorrowfully at them both.

"Why were you a demagogue?" he said to the first.

"Because," said the demagogue, "I stood for those principles that have made us what we are and have endeared our Party to the great heart of the people. In a word I stood unflinchingly on the plank of popular representation."

"And you?" said the Saint to her of the demi-monde.

"I wanted money," said the demi-mondaine.

And after some moments' thought the Saint said: "Well, come in; though you don't deserve to."

But to the demagogue he said: "We genuinely regret that the limited space at our disposal and our unfortunate lack of interest in those Questions that you have gone so far to inculate and have so ably upheld in the past, prevent us from giving you the support for which you seek."

And he shut the golden door.

THE GIANT POPPY

I dreamt that I went back to the hills I knew, whence on a clear day you can see the walls of Ilion and the plains of Roncesvalles. There used to be woods along the tops of those hills with clearings in them where the moonlight fell, and there when no one watched the fairies danced.

But there were no woods when I went back, no fairies nor distant glimpse of Ilion or plains of Roncesvalles, only one giant poppy waved in the wind, and as it waved it hummed “Remember not.” And by its oak-like stem a poet sat, dressed like a shepherd and playing an ancient tune softly upon a pipe. I asked him if the fairies had passed that way or anything olden.

He said: “The poppy has grown apace and is killing gods and fairies. Its fumes are suffocating the world, and its roots drain it of its beautiful strength.” And I asked him why he sat on the hills I knew, playing an olden tune.

And he answered: “Because the tune is bad for the poppy, which would otherwise grow more swiftly; and because if the brotherhood of which I am one were to cease to pipe on the hills men would stray over the world and be lost or come to terrible ends. We think we have saved Agamemnon.”

Then he fell to piping again that olden tune, while the wind among the poppy’s sleepy petals murmured “Remember not. Remember not.”

ROSES

I know a roadside where the wild rose blooms with a strange abundance. There is a beauty in the blossoms too of an almost exotic kind, a taint of deeper pink that shocks the Puritan flowers. Two hundred generations ago (generations, I mean, of roses) this was a village street; there was a floral decadence when they left their simple life and the roses came from the wilderness to clamber round houses of men.

Of all the memories of that little village, of all the cottages that stood there, of all the men and women whose homes they were, nothing remains but a more beautiful blush on the faces of the roses.

I hope that when London is clean passed away and the defeated fields come back again, like an exiled people returning after a war, they may find some beautiful thing to remind them of it all; because we have loved a little that swart old city.

THE MAN WITH THE GOLDEN EAR-RINGS

It may be that I dreamed this. So much at least is certain — that I turned one day from the traffic of a city, and came to its docks and saw its slimy wharves going down green and steep into the water, and saw the huge grey river slipping by and the lost things that went with it turning over and over, and I thought of the nations and unpitying Time, and saw and marvelled at the queenly ships come newly from the sea.

It was then, if I mistake not, that I saw leaning against a wall, with his face to the ships, a man with golden ear-rings. His skin had the dark tint of the southern men: the deep black hairs of his moustache were whitened a little with salt; he wore a dark blue jacket such as sailors wear, and the long boots of seafarers, but the look in his eyes was further afield than the ships, he seemed to be beholding the farthest things.

Even when I spoke to him he did not call home that look, but answered me dreamily with that same fixed stare as though his thoughts were heaving on far and lonely seas. I asked him what ship he had come by, for there were many there. The sailing ships were there with their sails all furled and their masts straight and still like a wintry forest; the steamers were there, and great liners, puffing up idle smoke into the twilight. He answered he had come by none of them. I asked him what line he worked on, for he was clearly a sailor; I mentioned well-known lines, but he did not know them. Then I asked him where he worked and what he was. And he said: “I work in the Sargasso Sea, and I am the last of the pirates, the last left alive.” And I shook him by the hand I do not know how many times. I said: “We feared you were dead. We feared you were dead.” And he answered sadly: “No. No. I have sinned too deeply on the Spanish seas: I am not allowed to die.”

THE DREAM OF KING KARNA-VOOTRA

King Karna-Vootra sitting on his throne commanding all things said: “I very clearly saw last night the queenly Vava-Nyria. Though partly she was hidden by great clouds that swept continually by her, rolling over and over, yet her face was unhidden and shone, being full of moonlight.

“I said to her:

“‘Walk with me by the great pools in many-gardened, beautiful Istrakhan where the lilies float that give delectable dreams; or, drawing aside the curtain of hanging orchids, pass with me thence from the pools by a secret path through the else impassable jungle that fills the only way between the mountains that shut in Istrakhan. They shut it in and look on it with joy at morning and at evening when the pools are strange with light, till in their gladness sometimes there melts the deadly snow that kills upon lonely heights the mountaineer. They have valleys among them older than the wrinkles in the moon.

“‘Come with me thence or linger with me there and either we shall come to romantic lands which the men of the caravans only speak of in song; or else we shall listlessly walk in a land so lovely that even the butterflies that float about it when they see their images flash in the sacred pools are terrified by their beauty, and each night we shall hear the myriad nightingales all in one chorus sing the stars to death. Do this and I will send heralds far from here with tidings of thy beauty; and they shall run and come to Séndara and men shall know it there who herd brown sheep; and from Séndara the rumour shall spread on, down either bank of the holy river of Zoth, till the people that make wattles in the plains shall hear of it and sing; but the heralds shall go northward along the hills until they come to Sooma. And in that golden city they shall tell the kings, that sit in their lofty alabaster house, of thy strange and sudden smiles. And often in distant markets shall thy story be told by merchants out from Sooma as they sit telling careless tales to lure men to their wares.

“‘And the heralds passing thence shall come even to Ingra, to Ingra where they dance. And there they shall tell of thee, so that thy name long hence shall be sung in that joyous city. And there they shall borrow camels and pass over the sands and go by desert ways to distant Nirid to tell of thee to the lonely men in the mountain monasteries.

“‘Come with me even now for it is Spring.’”

“And as I said this she faintly yet perceptibly shook her head. And it was only then I remembered my youth was gone, and she dead forty years.”

THE STORM

They saw a little ship that was far at sea and that went by the name of the *Petite Espérance*. And because of its uncouth rig and its lonely air and the look that it had of coming from strangers' lands they said: "It is neither a ship to greet nor desire, nor yet to succor when in the hands of the sea."

And the sea rose up as is the wont of the sea and the little ship from afar was in his hands, and frailer than ever seemed its feeble masts with their sails of fantastic cut and their alien flags. And the sea made a great and very triumphing voice, as the sea doth. And then there arose a wave that was very strong, even the ninth-born son of the hurricane and the tide, and hid the little ship and hid the whole of the far parts of the sea. Thereat said those who stood on the good dry land:

"'Twas but a little, worthless alien ship and it is sunk at sea, and it is good and right that the storm have spoil." And they turned and watched the course of the merchant-men, laden with silver and appeasing spice; year after year they cheered them into port and praised their goods and their familiar sails. And many years went by.

And at last with decks and bulwarks covered with cloth of gold; with age-old parrots that had known the troubadours, singing illustrious songs and preening their feathers of gold; with a hold full of emeralds and rubies; all silken with Indian loot; furling as it came in its way-worn alien sails, a galleon glided into port, shutting the sunlight from the merchantmen: and lo! it loomed the equal of the cliffs.

"Who are you?" they asked, "far-travelled wonderful ship?"

And they said: "The *Petite Espérance*."

"O," said the people on shore. "We thought you were sunk at sea."

"Sunk at sea?" sang the sailors. "We could not be sunk at sea — we had the gods on board."

A MISTAKEN IDENTITY

Fame as she walked at evening in a city saw the painted face of Notoriety flaunting beneath a gas-lamp, and many kneeled unto her in the dirt of the road.

"Who are you?" Fame said to her.

"I am Fame," said Notoriety.

Then Fame stole softly away so that no one knew she had gone.

And Notoriety presently went forth and all her worshippers rose and followed after, and she led them, as was most meet, to her native Pit.

THE TRUE HISTORY OF THE HARE AND THE TORTOISE

For a long time there was doubt with acrimony among the beasts as to whether the Hare or the Tortoise could run the swifter. Some said the Hare was the swifter of the two because he had such long ears, and others said the Tortoise was the swifter because anyone whose shell was so hard as that should be able to run hard too. And lo, the forces of estrangement and disorder perpetually postponed a decisive contest.

But when there was nearly war among the beasts, at last an arrangement was come to and it was decided that the Hare and the Tortoise should run a race of five hundred yards so that all should see who was right.

“Ridiculous nonsense!” said the Hare, and it was all his backers could do to get him to run.

“The contest is most welcome to me,” said the Tortoise, “I shall not shirk it.”

O, how his backers cheered.

Feeling ran high on the day of the race; the goose rushed at the fox and nearly pecked him. Both sides spoke loudly of the approaching victory up to the very moment of the race.

“I am absolutely confident of success,” said the Tortoise. But the Hare said nothing, he looked bored and cross. Some of his supporters deserted him then and went to the other side, who were loudly cheering the Tortoise’s inspiriting words. But many remained with the Hare. “We shall not be disappointed in him,” they said. “A beast with such long ears is bound to win.”

“Run hard,” said the supporters of the Tortoise.

And “run hard” became a kind of catch-phrase which everybody repeated to one another. “Hard shell and hard living. That’s what the country wants. Run hard,” they said. And these words were never uttered but multitudes cheered from their hearts.

Then they were off, and suddenly there was a hush.

The Hare dashed off for about a hundred yards, then he looked round to see where his rival was.

“It is rather absurd,” he said, “to race with a Tortoise.” And he sat down and scratched himself. “Run hard! Run hard!” shouted some.

“Let him rest,” shouted others. And “let him rest” became a catch-phrase too.

And after a while his rival drew near to him.

“There comes that damned Tortoise,” said the Hare, and he got up and ran as hard as could be so that he should not let the Tortoise beat him.

“Those ears will win,” said his friends. “Those ears will win; and establish upon an incontestable footing the truth of what we have said.” And some of them turned to the backers of the Tortoise and said: “What about your beast now?”

“Run hard,” they replied. “Run hard.”

The Hare ran on for nearly three hundred yards, nearly in fact as far as the winning-post, when it suddenly struck him what a fool he looked running races with a Tortoise who was nowhere in sight, and he sat down again and scratched.

“Run hard. Run hard,” said the crowd, and “Let him rest.”

“Whatever is the use of it?” said the Hare, and this time he stopped for good. Some say he slept.

There was desperate excitement for an hour or two, and then the Tortoise won.

“Run hard. Run hard,” shouted his backers. “Hard shell and hard living: that’s what has done it.” And then they asked the Tortoise what his achievement signified, and he went and asked the Turtle. And the Turtle said, “It is a glorious victory for the forces of swiftness.” And then the Tortoise repeated it to his friends. And all the beasts said nothing else for years. And even to this day, “a glorious victory for the forces of swiftness” is a catch-phrase in the house of the snail.

And the reason that this version of the race is not widely known is that very few of those that witnessed it survived the great forest-fire that happened shortly after. It came up over the weald by night with a great wind. The Hare and the Tortoise and a very few of the beasts saw it far off from a high bare hill that was at the edge of the trees, and they hurriedly called a meeting to decide what messenger they should send to warn the beasts in the forest.

They sent the Tortoise.

ALONE THE IMMORTALS

I heard it said that far away from here, on the wrong side of the deserts of Cathay and in a country dedicate to winter, are all the years that are dead. And there a certain valley shuts them in and hides them, as rumor has it, from the world, but not from the sight of the moon nor from those that dream in his rays.

And I said: I will go from here by ways of dream and I will come to that valley and enter in and mourn there for the good years that are dead. And I said: I will take a wreath, a wreath of mourning, and lay it at their feet in token of my sorrow for their dooms.

And when I sought about among the flowers, among the flowers for my wreath of mourning, the lily looked too large and the laurel looked too solemn and I found nothing frail enough nor slender to serve as an offering to the years that were dead. And at last I made a slender wreath of daisies in the manner that I had seen them made in one of the years that is dead.

"This," said I, "is scarce less fragile or less frail than one of those delicate forgotten years." Then I took my wreath in my hand and went from here. And when I had come by paths of mystery to that romantic land, where the valley that rumour told of lies close to the mountainous moon, I searched among the grass for those poor slight years for whom I bought my sorrow and my wreath. And when I found there nothing in the grass I said: "Time has shattered them and swept them away and left not even any faint remains."

But looking upwards in the blaze of the moon I suddenly saw colossi sitting near, and towering up and blotting out the stars and filling the night with blackness; and at those idols' feet I saw praying and making obeisance kings and the days that are and all times and all cities and all nations and all their gods. Neither the smoke of incense nor of the sacrifice burning reached those colossal heads, they sat there not to be measured, not to be over-thrown, not to be worn away.

I said: "Who are those?"

One answered: "Alone the Immortals."

And I said sadly: "I came not to see dread gods, but I came to shed my tears and to offer flowers at the feet of certain little years that are dead and may not come again."

He answered me: “These *are* the years that are dead, alone the immortals; all years to be are Their children — They fashioned their smiles and their laughter; all earthly kings They have crowned, all gods They have created; all the events to be flow down from their feet like a river, the worlds are flying pebbles that They have already thrown, and Time and all his centuries behind him kneel there with bended crests in token of vassalage at Their potent feet.”

And when I heard this I turned away with my wreath, and went back to my own land comforted.

A MORAL LITTLE TALE

There was once an earnest Puritan who held it wrong to dance. And for his principles he labored hard, his was a zealous life. And there loved him all of those who hated the dance; and those that loved the dance respected him too; they said "He is a pure, good man and acts according to his lights."

He did much to discourage dancing and helped to close several Sunday entertainments. Some kinds of poetry, he said, he liked, but not the fanciful kind as that might corrupt the thoughts of the very young. He always dressed in black.

He was quite interested in morality and was quite sincere and there grew to be much respect on Earth for his honest face and his flowing pure-white beard.

One night the Devil appeared unto him in a dream and said "Well done."

"Avaunt," said that earnest man.

"No, no, friend," said the Devil.

"Dare not to call me 'friend,'" he answered bravely.

"Come, come, friend," said the Devil. "Have you not done my work? Have you not put apart the couples that would dance? Have you not checked their laughter and their accursed mirth? Have you not worn my livery of black? O friend, friend, you do not know what a detestable thing it is to sit in hell and hear people being happy, and singing in theatres and singing in the fields, and whispering after dances under the moon," and he fell to cursing fearfully.

"It is you," said the Puritan, "that put into their hearts the evil desire to dance; and black is God's own livery, not yours."

And the Devil laughed contemptuously and spoke.

"He only made the silly colors," he said, "and useless dawns on hill-slopes facing South, and butterflies flapping along them as soon as the sun rose high, and foolish maidens coming out to dance, and the warm mad West wind, and worst of all that pernicious influence Love."

And when the Devil said that God made Love that earnest man sat up in bed and shouted "Blasphemy! Blasphemy!"

“It’s true,” said the Devil. “It isn’t I that send the village fools muttering and whispering two by two in the woods when the harvest moon is high, it’s as much as I can bear even to see them dancing.”

“Then,” said the man, “I have mistaken right for wrong; but as soon as I wake I will fight you yet.”

“O, no you don’t,” said the Devil. “You don’t wake up out of this sleep.”

And somewhere far away Hell’s black steel doors were opened, and arm in arm those two were drawn within, and the doors shut behind them and still they went arm in arm, trudging further and further into the deeps of Hell, and it was that Puritan’s punishment to know that those that he cared for on Earth would do evil as he had done.

THE RETURN OF SONG

“The swans are singing again,” said to one another the gods. And looking downwards, for my dreams had taken me to some fair and far Valhalla, I saw below me an iridescent bubble not greatly larger than a star shine beautifully but faintly, and up and up from it looking larger and larger came a flock of white, innumerable swans, singing and singing and singing, till it seemed as though even the gods were wild ships swimming in music.

“What is it?” I said to one that was humble among the gods.

“Only a world has ended,” he said to me, “and the swans are coming back to the gods returning the gift of song.”

“A whole world dead!” I said.

“Dead,” said he that was humble among the gods. “The worlds are not for ever; only song is immortal.”

“Look! Look!” he said. “There will be a new one soon.”

And I looked and saw the larks, going down from the gods.

SPRING IN TOWN

At a street corner sat, and played with a wind, Winter disconsolate.

Still tingled the fingers of the passers-by and still their breath was visible, and still they huddled their chins into their coats when turning a corner they met with a new wind, still windows lighted early sent out into the street the thought of romantic comfort by evening fires; these things still were, yet the throne of Winter tottered, and every breeze brought tidings of further fortresses lost on lakes or boreal hill-slopes. And not any longer as a king did Winter appear in those streets, as when the city was decked with gleaming white to greet him as a conqueror and he rode in with his glittering icicles and haughty retinue of prancing winds, but he sat there with a little wind at the corner of the street like some old blind beggar with his hungry dog. And as to some old blind beggar Death approaches, and the alert ears of the sightless man prophetically hear his far-off footfall, so there came suddenly to Winter's ears the sound, from some neighbouring garden, of Spring approaching as she walked on daisies. And Spring approaching looked at huddled inglorious Winter.

"Begone," said Spring.

"There is nothing for you to do here," said Winter to her. Nevertheless he drew about him his grey and battered cloak and rose and called to his little bitter wind and up a side street that led northward strode away.

Pieces of paper and tall clouds of dust went with him as far as the city's outer gate. He turned then and called to Spring: "You can do nothing in this city," he said; then he marched homeward over plains and sea and heard his old winds howling as he marched. The ice broke up behind him and foundered like navies. To left and to right of him flew the flocks of the sea-birds, and far before him the geese's triumphant cry went like a clarion. Greater and greater grew his stature as he went northwards and ever more kingly his mien. Now he took baronies at a stride and now counties and came again to the snow-white frozen lands where the wolves came out to meet him and, draping himself anew with old grey clouds, strode through the gates of his invincible home, two old ice barriers swinging on pillars of ice that had never known the sun.

So the town was left to Spring. And she peered about to see what she could do with it. Presently she saw a dejected dog coming prowling down

the road, so she sang to him and he gambolled. I saw him next day strutting by with something of an air. Where there were trees she went to them and whispered, and they sang the arboreal song that only trees can hear, and the green buds came peeping out as stars while yet it is twilight, secretly one by one. She went to gardens and awaked from dreaming the warm maternal earth. In little patches bare and desolate she called up like a flame the golden crocus, or its purple brother like an emperor's ghost. She gladdened the graceless backs of untidy houses, here with a weed, there with a little grass. She said to the air, "Be joyous."

Children began to know that daisies blew in unfrequented corners. Buttonholes began to appear in the coats of the young men. The work of Spring was accomplished.

HOW THE ENEMY CAME TO THLUNRANA

It had been prophesied of old and foreseen from the ancient days that its enemy would come upon Thlunrana. And the date of its doom was known and the gate by which it would enter, yet none had prophesied of the enemy who he was save that he was of the gods though he dwelt with men. Meanwhile Thlunrana, that secret lamaserai, that chief cathedral of wizardry, was the terror of the valley in which it stood and of all lands round about it. So narrow and high were the windows and so strange when lighted at night that they seemed to regard men with the demoniac leer of something that had a secret in the dark. Who were the magicians and the deputy-magicians and the great arch-wizard of that furtive place nobody knew, for they went veiled and hooded and cloaked completely in black.

Though her doom was close upon her and the enemy of prophecy should come that very night through the open, southward door that was named the Gate of the Doom, yet that rocky edifice Thlunrana remained mysterious still, venerable, terrible, dark, and dreadfully crowned with her doom. It was not often that anyone dared wander near to Thlunrana by night when the moan of the magicians invoking we know not Whom rose faintly from inner chambers, scaring the drifting bats: but on the last night of all the man from the black-thatched cottage by the five pine-trees came, because he would see Thlunrana once again before the enemy that was divine, but that dwelt with men, should come against it and it should be no more. Up the dark valley he went like a bold man, but his fears were thick upon him; his bravery bore their weight but stooped a little beneath them. He went in at the southward gate that is named the Gate of the Doom. He came into a dark hall, and up a marble stairway passed to see the last of Thlunrana. At the top a curtain of black velvet hung and he passed into a chamber heavily hung with curtains, with a gloom in it that was blacker than anything they could account for. In a sombre chamber beyond, seen through a vacant archway, magicians with lighted tapers plied their wizardry and whispered incantations. All the rats in the place were passing away, going whimpering down the stairway. The man from the black-thatched cottage passed through that second chamber: the magicians did not look at him and did not cease to whisper. He passed from them through heavy curtains still of black velvet and came into a chamber of black marble where nothing stirred. Only one

taper burned in the third chamber; there were no windows. On the smooth floor and under the smooth wall a silk pavilion stood with its curtains drawn close together: this was the holy of holies of that ominous place, its inner mystery. One on each side of it dark figures crouched, either of men or women or cloaked stone, or of beasts trained to be silent. When the awful stillness of the mystery was more than he could bear the man from the black-thatched cottage by the five pine-trees went up to the silk pavilion, and with a bold and nervous clutch of the hand drew one of the curtains aside, and saw the inner mystery, and laughed. And the prophecy was fulfilled, and Thlunrana was never more a terror to the valley, but the magicians passed away from their terrific halls and fled through the open fields wailing and beating their breasts, for laughter was the enemy that was doomed to come against Thlunrana through her southward gate (that was named the Gate of the Doom), and it is of the gods but dwells with man.

A LOSING GAME

Once in a tavern Man met face to skull with Death. Man entered gaily but Death gave no greeting, he sat with his jowl morosely over an ominous wine.

"Come, come," said Man, "we have been antagonists long, and if I were losing yet I should not be surly."

But Death remained unfriendly watching his bowl of wine and gave no word in answer.

Then Man solicitously moved nearer to him and, speaking cheerily still, "Come, come," he said again, "you must not resent defeat."

And still Death was gloomy and cross and sipped at his infamous wine and would not look up at Man and would not be companionable.

But Man hated gloom either in beast or god, and it made him unhappy to see his adversary's discomfort, all the more because he was the cause, and still he tried to cheer him.

"Have you not slain the Dinatherium?" he said. "Have you not put out the Moon? Why! you will beat me yet."

And with a dry and barking sound Death wept and nothing said; and presently Man arose and went wondering away; for he knew not if Death wept out of pity for his opponent, or because he knew that he should not have such sport again when the old game was over and Man was gone, or whether because perhaps, for some hidden reason, he could never repeat on Earth his triumph over the Moon.

TAKING UP PICADILLY

Going down Picadilly one day and nearing Grosvenor Place I saw, if my memory is not at fault, some workmen with their coats off — or so they seemed. They had pickaxes in their hands and wore corduroy trousers and that little leather band below the knee that goes by the astonishing name of "York-to-London."

They seemed to be working with peculiar vehemence, so that I stopped and asked one what they were doing.

"We are taking up Picadilly," he said to me.

"But at this time of year?" I said. "Is it usual in June?"

"We are not what we seem," said he.

"Oh, I see," I said, "you are doing it for a joke."

"Well, not exactly that," he answered me.

"For a bet?" I said.

"Not precisely," said he.

And then I looked at the bit that they had already picked, and though it was broad daylight over my head it was darkness down there, all full of the southern stars.

"It was noisy and bad and we grew aweary of it," said he that wore corduroy trousers. "We are not what we appear."

They were taking up Picadilly altogether.

AFTER THE FIRE

When that happened which had been so long in happening and the world hit a black, uncharted star, certain tremendous creatures out of some other world came peering among the cinders to see if there were anything there that it were worth while to remember. They spoke of the great things that the world was known to have had; they mentioned the mammoth. And presently they saw man's temples, silent and windowless, staring like empty skulls.

"Some great thing has been here," one said, "in these huge places." "It was the mammoth," said one. "Something greater than he," said another.

And then they found that the greatest thing in the world had been the dreams of man.

THE CITY

In time as well as space my fancy roams far from here. It led me once to the edge of certain cliffs that were low and red and rose up out of a desert: a little way off in the desert there was a city. It was evening, and I sat and watched the city.

Presently I saw men by threes and fours come softly stealing out of that city's gate to the number of about twenty. I heard the hum of men's voices speaking at evening.

"It is well they are gone," they said. "It is well they are gone. We can do business now. It is well they are gone." And the men that had left the city sped away over the sand and so passed into the twilight.

"Who are these men?" I said to my glittering leader.

"The poets," my fancy answered. "The poets and artists."

"Why do they steal away?" I said to him. "And why are the people glad that they have gone?"

He said: "It must be some doom that is going to fall on the city, something has warned them and they have stolen away. Nothing may warn the people."

I heard the wrangling voices, glad with commerce, rise up from the city. And then I also departed, for there was an ominous look on the face of the sky.

And only a thousand years later I passed that way, and there was nothing, even among the weeds, of what had been that city.

THE FOOD OF DEATH

Death was sick. But they brought him bread that the modern bakers make, whitened with alum, and the tinned meats of Chicago, with a pinch of our modern substitute for salt. They carried him into the dining-room of a great hotel (in that close atmosphere Death breathed more freely), and there they gave him their cheap Indian tea. They brought him a bottle of wine that they called champagne. Death drank it up. They brought a newspaper and looked up the patent medicines; they gave him the foods that it recommended for invalids, and a little medicine as prescribed in the paper. They gave him some milk and borax, such as children drink in England.

Death arose ravening, strong, and strode again through the cities.

THE LONELY IDOL

I had from a friend an old outlandish stone, a little swine-faced idol to whom no one prayed.

And when I saw his melancholy case as he sat cross-legged at receipt of prayer, holding a little scourge that the years had broken (and no one heeded the scourge and no one prayed and no one came with squealing sacrifice; and he had been a god), then I took pity on the little forgotten thing and prayed to it as perhaps they prayed long since, before the coming of the strange dark ships, and humbled myself and said:

"O idol, idol of the hard pale stone, invincible to the years, O scourge-holder, give ear for behold I pray.

"O little pale-green image whose wanderings are from far, know thou that here in Europe and in other lands near by, too soon there pass from us the sweets and song and the lion strength of youth: too soon do their cheeks fade, their hair grow grey and our beloved die; too brittle is beauty, too far off is fame and the years are gathered too soon; there are leaves, leaves falling, everywhere falling; there is autumn among men, autumn and reaping; failure there is, struggle, dying and weeping, and all that is beautiful hath not remained but is even as the glory of morning upon the water.

"Even our memories are gathered too with the sound of the ancient voices, the pleasant ancient voices that come to our ears no more; the very gardens of our childhood fade, and there dims with the speed of the years even the mind's own eye.

"O be not any more the friend of Time, for the silent hurry of his malevolent feet have trodden down what's fairest; I almost hear the whimper of the years running behind him hound-like, and it takes few to tear us.

"All that is beautiful he crushes down as a big man tramples daises, all that is fairest. How very fair are the little children of men. It is autumn with all the world, and the stars weep to see it.

"Therefore no longer be the friend of Time, who will not let us be, and be not good to him but pity us, and let lovely things live on for the sake of our tears."

Thus prayed I out of compassion one windy day to the snout-faced idol to whom no one kneeled.

THE SPHINX IN THEBES (MASSACHUSETTS)

There was a woman in a steel-built city who had all that money could buy, she had gold and dividends and trains and houses, and she had pets to play with, but she had no sphinx.

So she besought them to bring her a live sphinx; and therefore they went to the menageries, and then to the forests and the desert places, and yet could find no sphinx.

And she would have been content with a little lion but that one was already owned by a woman she knew; so they had to search the world again for a sphinx.

And still there was none.

But they were not men that it is easy to baffle, and at last they found a sphinx in a desert at evening watching a ruined temple whose gods she had eaten hundreds of years ago when her hunger was on her. And they cast chains on her, who was still with an ominous stillness, and took her westwards with them and brought her home.

And so the sphinx came to the steel-built city.

And the woman was very glad that she owned a sphinx: but the sphinx stared long into her eyes one day, and softly asked a riddle of the woman.

And the woman could not answer, and she died.

And the sphinx is silent again and none knows what she will do.

THE REWARD

One's spirit goes further in dreams than it does by day. Wandering once by night from a factory city I came to the edge of Hell.

The place was foul with cinders and cast-off things, and jagged, half-buried things with shapeless edges, and there was a huge angel with a hammer building in plaster and steel. I wondered what he did in that dreadful place. I hesitated, then asked him what he was building. "We are adding to Hell," he said, "to keep pace with the times." "Don't be too hard on them," I said, for I had just come out of a compromising age and a weakening country. The angel did not answer. "It won't be as bad as the old hell, will it?" I said. "Worse," said the angel.

"How can you reconcile it with your conscience as a Minister of Grace," I said, "to inflict such a punishment?" (They talked like this in the city whence I had come and I could not avoid the habit of it.)

"They have invented a new cheap yeast," said the angel.

I looked at the legend on the walls of the hell that the angel was building, the words were written in flame, every fifteen seconds they changed their color, "Yeasto, the great new yeast, it builds up body and brain, and something more."

"They shall look at it for ever," the angel said.

"But they drove a perfectly legitimate trade," I said, "the law allowed it."

The angel went on hammering into place the huge steel uprights.

"You are very revengeful," I said. "Do you never rest from doing this terrible work?"

"I rested one Christmas Day," the angel said, "and looked and saw little children dying of cancer. I shall go on now until the fires are lit."

"It is very hard to prove," I said, "that the yeast is as bad as you think."

"After all," I said, "they must live."

And the angel made no answer but went on building his hell.

THE TROUBLE IN LEAFY GREEN STREET

She went to the idol-shop in Moleshill Street, where the old man mumbles, and said: “I want a god to worship when it is wet.”

The old man reminded her of the heavy penalties that rightly attach to idolatry and, when he had enumerated all, she answered him as was meet: “Give me a god to worship when it is wet.”

And he went to the back places of his shop and sought out and brought her a god. The same was carved of grey stone and wore a propitious look and was named, as the old man mumbled, The God of Rainy Cheerfulness.

Now it may be that long confinement to the house affects adversely the liver, or these things may be of the soul, but certain it is that on a rainy day her spirits so far descended that those cheerful creatures came within sight of the Pit, and, having tried cigarettes to no good end, she bethought her of Moleshill Street and the mumbling man.

He brought the grey idol forth and mumbled of guarantees, although he put nothing on paper, and she paid him there and then his preposterous price and took the idol away.

And on the next wet day that there ever was she prayed to the grey-stone idol that she had bought, the God of Rainy Cheerfulness (who knows with what ceremony or what lack of it?), and so brought down on her in Leafy Green Street, in the preposterous house at the corner, that doom of which all men speak.

THE MIST

The mist said unto the mist: “Let us go up into the Downs.” And the mist came up weeping.

And the mist went into the high places and the hollows.

And clumps of trees in the distance stood ghostly in the haze.

But I went to a prophet, one who loved the Downs, and I said to him: “Why does the mist come up weeping into the Downs when it goes into the high places and the hollows?”

And he answered: “The mist is the company of a multitude of souls who never saw the Downs, and now are dead. Therefore they come up weeping into the Downs, who are dead and never saw them.”

FURROW-MAKER

He was all in black, but his friend was dressed in brown, members of two old families.

"Is there any change in the way you build your houses?" said he in black.

"No change," said the other. "And you?"

"We change not," he said.

A man went by in the distance riding a bicycle.

"He is always changing," said the one in black, "of late almost every century. He is uneasy. Always changing."

"He changes the way he builds his house, does he not?" said the brown one.

"So my family say," said the other. "They say he has changed of late."

"They say he takes much to cities?" the brown one said.

"My cousin who lives in belfries tells me so," said the black one.
"He says he is much in cities."

"And there he grows lean?" said the brown one.

"Yes, he grows lean."

"Is it true what they say?" said the brown one.

"Caw," said the black one.

"Is it true that he cannot live many centuries?"

"No, no," said the black one. "Furrow-maker will not die. We must not lose furrow-maker. He has been foolish of late, he has played with smoke and is sick. His engines have wearied him and his cities are evil. Yes, he is very sick. But in a few centuries he will forget his folly and we shall not lose furrow-maker. Time out of mind he has delved and my family have got their food from the raw earth behind him. He will not die."

"But they say, do they not?" said the brown one, "his cities are noisome, and that he grows sick in them and can run no longer, and that it is with him as it is with us when we grow too many, and the grass has the bitter taste in the rainy season, and our young grow bloated and die."

"Who says it?" replied the black one.

"Pigeon," the brown one answered. "He came back all dirty. And Hare went down to the edge of the cities once. He says it too. Man was too sick

to chase him. He thinks that Man will die, and his wicked friend Dog with him. Dog, he will die. That nasty fellow Dog. He will die too, the dirty fellow!"

"Pigeon and Hare!" said the black one. "We shall not lose furrow-maker."

"Who told you he will not die?" his brown friend said.

"Who told me!" the black one said. "My family and his have understood each other times out of mind. We know what follies will kill each other and what each may survive, and I say that furrow-maker will not die."

"He will die," said the brown one.

"Caw," said the other.

And Man said in his heart: "Just one invention more. There is something I want to do with petrol yet, and then I will give it all up and go back to the woods."

LOBSTER SALAD

I was climbing round the perilous outside of the Palace of Colquonhombros. So far below me that in the tranquil twilight and clear air of those lands I could only barely see them lay the craggy tops of the mountains.

It was along no battlements or terrace edge I was climbing, but on the sheer face of the wall itself, getting what foothold I could where the boulders joined.

Had my feet been bare I was done, but though I was in my night-shirt I had on stout leather boots, and their edges somehow held in those narrow cracks. My fingers and wrists were aching.

Had it been possible to stop for a moment I might have been lured to give a second look at the fearful peaks of the mountains down there in the twilight, and this must have been fatal.

That the thing was all a dream is beside the point. We have fallen in dreams before, but it is well known that if in one of those falls you ever hit the ground — you die: I had looked at those menacing mountaintops and knew well that such a fall as the one I feared must have such a termination. Then I went on.

It is strange what different sensations there can be in different boulders — every one gleaming with the same white light and every one chosen to match the rest by minions of ancient kings — when your life depends on the edges of every one you come to. Those edges seemed strangely different. It was of no avail to overcome the terror of one, for the next would give you a hold in quite a different way or hand you over to death in a different manner. Some were too sharp to hold and some too flush with the wall, those whose hold was the best crumbled the soonest; each rock had its different terror: and then there were those things that followed behind me.

And at last I came to a breach made long ago by earthquake, lightning or war: I should have had to go down a thousand feet to get round it and they would come up with me while I was doing that, for certain sable apes that I have not mentioned as yet, things that had tigerish teeth and were born and bred on that wall, had pursued me all the evening. In any case I could have gone no farther, nor did I know what the king would do along whose wall I

was climbing. It was time to drop and be done with it or stop and await those apes.

And then it was that I remembered a pin, thrown carelessly down out of an evening-tie in another world to the one where grew that glittering wall, and lying now if no evil chance had removed it on a chest of drawers by my bed. The apes were very close, and hurrying, for they knew my fingers were slipping, and the cruel peaks of those infernal mountains seemed surer of me than the apes. I reached out with a desperate effort of will towards where the pin lay on the chest of drawers. I groped about. I found it! I ran it into my arm. Saved!

THE RETURN OF THE EXILES

The old man with a hammer and the one-eyed man with a spear were seated by the roadside talking as I came up the hill.

"It isn't as though they hadn't asked us," the one with the hammer said.

"There ain't no more than twenty as knows about it," said the other.

"Twenty's twenty," said the first.

"After all these years," said the one-eyed man with the spear. "After all these years. We might go back just once."

"O' course we might," said the other.

Their clothes were old even for laborers, the one with the hammer had a leather apron full of holes and blackened, and their hands looked like leather. But whatever they were they were English, and this was pleasant to see after all the motors that had passed me that day with their burden of mixed and doubtful nationalities.

When they saw me the one with the hammer touched his greasy cap.

"Might we make so bold, sir," he said, "as the ask the way to Stonehenge?"

"We never ought to go," mumbled the other plaintively. "There's not more than twenty as knows, but…."

I was bicycling there myself to see the place so I pointed out the way and rode on at once, for there was something so utterly servile about them both that I did not care for their company. They seemed by their wretched mien to have been persecuted or utterly neglected for many years, I thought that very likely they had done long terms of penal servitude.

When I came to Stonehenge I saw a group of about a score of men standing among the stones. They asked me with some solemnity if I was expecting anyone, and when I said No they spoke to me no more. It was three miles back where I left those strange old men, but I had not been in the stone circle long when they appeared, coming with great strides along the road. When they saw them all the people took off their hats and acted very strangely, and I saw that they had a goat which they led up then to the old altar stone. And the two old men came up with their hammer and spear and began apologizing plaintively for the liberty they had taken in coming

back to that place, and all the people knelt on the grass before them. And then still kneeling they killed the goat by the altar, and when the two old men saw this they came up with many excuses and eagerly sniffed the blood. And at first this made them happy. But soon the one with the spear began to whimper. “It used to be men,” he lamented. “It used to be men.”

And the twenty men began looking uneasily at each other, and the plaint of the one-eyed man went on in that tearful voice, and all of a sudden they all looked at me. I do not know who the two old men were or what any of them were doing, but there are moments when it is clearly time to go, and I left them there and then. And just as I got up on to my bicycle I heard the plaintive voice of the one with the hammer apologizing for the liberty he had taken in coming back to Stonehenge.

“But after all these years,” I heard him crying, “After all these years….”

And the one with the spear said: “Yes, after three thousand years….”

NATURE AND TIME

Through the streets of Coventry one winter's night strode a triumphant spirit. Behind him stooping, unkempt, utterly ragged, wearing the clothes and look that outcasts have, whining, weeping, reproaching, an ill-used spirit tried to keep pace with him. Continually she plucked him by the sleeve and cried out to him as she panted after and he strode resolute on.

It was a bitter night, yet it did not seem to be the cold that she feared, ill-clad though she was, but the trams and the ugly shops and the glare of the factories, from which she continually winced as she hobbled on, and the pavement hurt her feet.

He that strode on in front seemed to care for nothing, it might be hot or cold, silent or noisy, pavement or open fields, he merely had the air of striding on.

And she caught up and clutched him by the elbow. I heard her speak in her unhappy voice, you scarcely heard it for the noise of the traffic.

"You have forgotten me," she complained to him. "You have forsaken me here."

She pointed to Coventry with a wide wave of her arm and seemed to indicate other cities beyond. And he gruffly told her to keep pace with him and that he did not forsake her. And she went on with her pitiful lamentation.

"My anemones are dead for miles," she said, "all my woods are fallen and still the cities grow. My child Man is unhappy and my other children are dying, and still the cities grow and you have forgotten me!"

And then he turned angrily on her, almost stopping in that stride of his that began when the stars were made.

"When have I ever forgotten you?" he said, "or when forsaken you ever? Did I not throw down Babylon for you? And is not Nineveh gone? Where is Persepolis that troubled you? Where Tarshish and Tyre? And you have said I forget you."

And at this she seemed to take a little comfort. I heard her speak once more, looking wistfully at her companion. "When will the fields come back and the grass for my children?"

"Soon, soon," he said: then they were silent. And he strode away, she limping along behind him, and all the clocks in the towers chimed as he

passed.

THE SONG OF THE BLACKBIRD

As the poet passed the thorn-tree the blackbird sang.

"How ever do you do it?" the poet said, for he knew bird language.

"It was like this," said the blackbird. "It really was the most extraordinary thing. I made that song last Spring, it came to me all of a sudden. There was the most beautiful she-blackbird that the world has ever seen. Her eyes were blacker than lakes are at night, her feathers were blacker than the night itself, and nothing was as yellow as her beak; she could fly much faster than the lightning. She was not an ordinary she-blackbird, there has never been any other like her at all. I did not dare go near her because she was so wonderful. One day last Spring when it got warm again — it had been cold, we ate berries, things were quite different then, but Spring came and it got warm — one day I was thinking how wonderful she was and it seemed so extraordinary to think that I should ever have seen her, the only really wonderful she-blackbird in the world, that I opened my beak to give a shout, and then this song came, and there had never been anything like it before, and luckily I remembered it, the very song that I sang just now. But what is so extraordinary, the most amazing occurence of that marvellous day, was that no sooner had I sung the song than that very bird, the most wonderful she-blackbird in the world, flew right up to me and sat quite close to me on the same tree. I never remember such wonderful times as those.

"Yes, the song came in a moment, and as I was saying…."

And an old wanderer walking with a stick came by and the blackbird flew away, and the poet told the old man the blackbird's wonderful story.

"That song new?" said the wanderer. "Not a bit of it. God made it years ago. All the blackbirds used to sing it when I was young. It was new then."

THE MESSENGERS

One wandering nigh Parnassus chasing hares heard the high Muses.

"Take us a message to the Golden Town."

Thus sang the Muses.

But the man said: "They do not call to me. Not to such as me speak the Muses."

And the Muses called him by name.

"Take us a message," they said, "to the Golden Town."

And the man was downcast for he would have chased hares.

And the Muses called again.

And when whether in valleys or on high crags of the hills he still heard the Muses he went at last to them and heard their message, though he would fain have left it to other men and chased the fleet hares still in happy valleys.

And they gave him a wreath of laurels carved out of emeralds as only the Muses can carve. "By this," they said, "they shall know that you come from the Muses."

And the man went from that place and dressed in scarlet silks as befitted one that came from the high Muses. And through the gateway of the Golden Town he ran and cried his message, and his cloak floated behind him. All silent sat the wise men and the aged, they of the Golden Town; cross-legged they sat before their houses reading from parchments a message of the Muses that they sent long before.

And the young man cried his message from the Muses.

And they rose up and said: "Thou art not from the Muses. Otherwise spake they." And they stoned him and he died.

And afterwards they carved his message upon gold; and read it in their temples on holy days.

When will the Muses rest? When are they weary? They sent another messenger to the Golden Town. And they gave him a wand of ivory to carry in his hand with all the beautiful stories of the world wondrously carved thereon. And only the Muses could have carved it. "By this," they said, "they shall know that you come from the Muses."

And he came through the gateway of the Golden Town with the message he had for its people. And they rose up at once in the Golden street, they

rose from reading the message that they had carved upon gold. “The last who came,” they said, “came with a wreath of laurels carved out of emeralds, as only the Muses can carve. You are not from the Muses.” And even as they had stoned the last so also they stoned him. And afterwards they carved his message on gold and laid it up in their temples.

When will the Muses rest? When are they weary? Even yet once again they sent a messenger under the gateway into the Golden Town. And for all that he wore a garland of gold that the high Muses gave him, a garland of kingcups soft and yellow on his head, yet fashioned of pure gold and by whom but the Muses, yet did they stone him in the Golden Town. But they had the message, and what care the Muses?

And yet they will not rest, for some while since I heard them call to me.

“Go take our message,” they said, “unto the Golden Town.”

But I would not go. And they spake a second time. “Go take our message,” they said.

And still I would not go, and they cried out a third time: “Go take our message.”

And though they cried a third time I would not go. But morning and night they cried and through long evenings.

When will the Muses rest? When are they weary? And when they would not cease to call to me I went to them and I said: “The Golden Town is the Golden Town no longer. They have sold their pillars for brass and their temples for money, they have made coins out of their golden doors. It is become a dark town full of trouble, there is no ease in its streets, beauty has left it and the old songs are gone.”

“Go take our message,” they cried.

And I said to the high Muses: “You do not understand. You have no message for the Golden Town, the holy city no longer.”

“Go take our message,” they cried.

“What is your message?” I said to the high Muses.

And when I heard their message I made excuses, dreading to speak such things in the Golden Town; and again they bade me go.

And I said: “I will not go. None will believe me.”

And still the Muses cry to me all night long.

They do not understand. How should they know?

THE THREE TALL SONS

And at last Man raised on high the final glory of his civilization, the towering edifice of the ultimate city.

Softly beneath him in the deeps of the earth purred his machinery fulfilling all his needs, there was no more toil for man. There he sat at ease discussing the Sex Problem.

And sometimes painfully out of forgotten fields, there came to his outer door, came to the furthest rampart of the final glory of Man, a poor old woman begging. And always they turned her away. This glory of Man's achievement, this city was not for her.

It was Nature that came thus begging in from the fields, whom they always turned away.

And away she went again alone to her fields.

And one day she came again, and again they sent her hence. But her three tall sons came too.

"These shall go in," she said. "Even these my sons to your city."

And the three tall sons went in.

And these are Nature's sons, the forlorn one's terrible children,
War, Famine and Plague.

Yea and they went in there and found Man unawares in his city still poring over his Problems, obsessed with his civilization, and never hearing their tread as those three came up behind.

COMPROMISE

They built their gorgeous home, their city of glory, above the lair of the earthquake. They built it of marble and gold in the shining youth of the world. There they feasted and fought and called their city immortal, and danced and sang songs to the gods. None heeded the earthquake in all those joyous streets. And down in the deeps of the earth, on the black feet of the abyss, they that would conquer Man mumbled long in the darkness, mumbled and goaded the earthquake to try his strength with that city, to go forth blithely at night and to gnaw its pillars like bones. And down in those grimy deeps the earthquake answered them, and would not do their pleasure and would not stir from thence, for who knew who they were who danced all day where he rumbled, and what if the lords of that city that had no fear of his anger were haply even the gods!

And the centuries plodded by, on and on round the world, and one day they that had danced, they that had sung in that city, remembered the lair of the earthquake in the deeps down under their feet, and made plans one with another and sought to avert the danger, sought to appease the earthquake and turn his anger away.

They sent down singing girls, and priests with oats and wine, they sent down garlands and propitious berries, down by dark steps to the black depths of the earth, they sent peacocks newly slain, and boys with burning spices, and their thin white sacred cats with collars of pearls all newly drawn from sea, they sent huge diamonds down in coffers of teak, and ointment and strange oriental dyes, arrows and armor and the rings of their queen.

“Oho,” said the earthquake in the coolth of the earth, “so they are not the gods.”

WHAT WE HAVE COME TO

When the advertiser saw the cathedral spires over the downs in the distance, he looked at them and wept.

"If only," he said, "this were an advertisement of Beefo, so nice, so nutritious, try it in your soup, ladies like it."

THE TOMB OF PAN

“Seeing,” they said, “that old-time Pan is dead, let us now make a tomb for him and a monument, that the dreadful worship of long ago may be remembered and avoided by all.”

So said the people of the enlightened lands. And they built a white and mighty tomb of marble. Slowly it rose under the hands of the builders and longer every evening after sunset it gleamed with rays of the departed sun.

And many mourned for Pan while the builders built; many reviled him. Some called the builders to cease and to weep for Pan and others called them to leave no memorial at all of so infamous a god. But the builders built on steadily.

And one day all was finished, and the tomb stood there like a steep sea-cliff. And Pan was carved thereon with humbled head and the feet of angels pressed upon his neck. And when the tomb was finished the sun had already set, but the afterglow was rosy on the huge bulk of Pan.

And presently all the enlightened people came, and saw the tomb and remembered Pan who was dead, and all deplored him and his wicked age. But a few wept apart because of the death of Pan.

But at evening as he stole out of the forest, and slipped like a shadow softly along the hills, Pan saw the tomb and laughed.

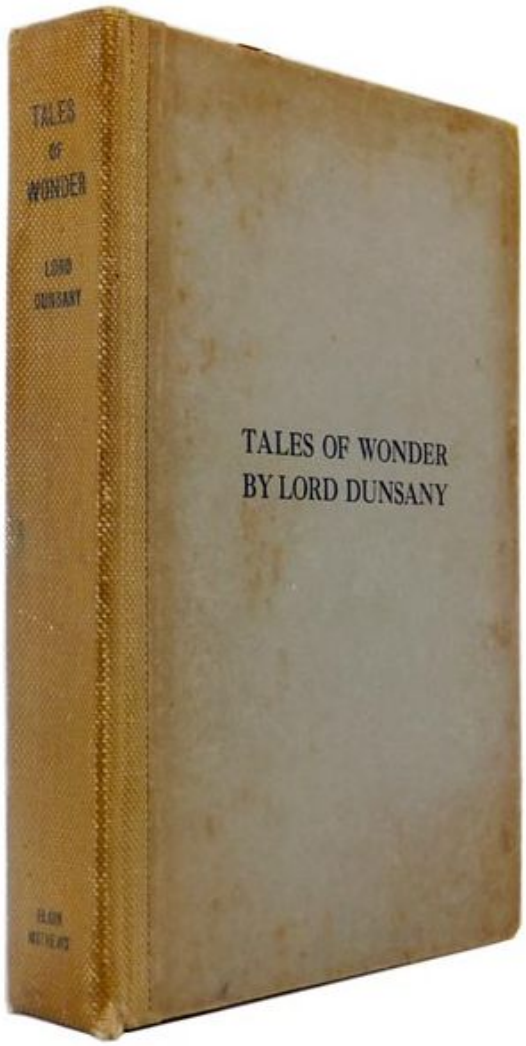
TALES OF WONDER



OR, THE LAST BOOK OF WONDER

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The first edition

Preface

Ebrington Barracks

Aug. 16th 1916.

I do not know where I may be when this preface is read. As I write it in August 1916, I am at Ebrington Barracks, Londonderry, recovering from a slight wound. But it does not greatly matter where I am; my dreams are here before you amongst the following pages; and writing in a day when life is cheap, dreams seem to me all the dearer, the only things that survive.

Just now the civilization of Europe seems almost to have ceased, and nothing seems to grow in her torn fields but death, yet this is only for a while and dreams will come back again and bloom as of old, all the more radiantly for this terrible ploughing, as the flowers will bloom again where the trenches are and the primroses shelter in shell-holes for many seasons, when weeping Liberty has come home to Flanders.

To some of you in America this may seem an unnecessary and wasteful quarrel, as other people's quarrels often are; but it comes to this that though we are all killed there will be songs again, but if we were to submit and so survive there could be neither songs nor dreams, nor any joyous free things any more.

And do not regret the lives that are wasted amongst us, or the work that the dead would have done, for war is no accident that man's care could have averted, but is as natural, though not as regular, as the tides; as well regret the things that the tide has washed away, which destroys and cleanses and crumbles, and spares the minutest shells.

And now I will write nothing further about our war, but offer you these books of dreams from Europe as one throws things of value, if only to oneself, at the last moment out of a burning house.

DUNSANY.

A Tale of London

“Come,” said the Sultan to his hasheesh-eater in the very furthest lands that know Bagdad, “dream to me now of London.”

And the hasheesh-eater made a low obeisance and seated himself cross-legged upon a purple cushion broidered with golden poppies, on the floor, beside an ivory bowl where the hasheesh was, and having eaten liberally of the hasheesh blinked seven times and spoke thus:

“O Friend of God, know then that London is the desiderate town even of all Earth’s cities. Its houses are of ebony and cedar which they roof with thin copper plates that the hand of Time turns green. They have golden balconies in which amethysts are where they sit and watch the sunset. Musicians in the gloaming steal softly along the ways; unheard their feet fall on the white sea-sand with which those ways are strewn, and in the darkness suddenly they play on dulcimers and instruments with strings. Then are there murmurs in the balconies praising their skill, then are there bracelets cast down to them for reward and golden necklaces and even pearls.

“Indeed but the city is fair; there is by the sandy ways a paving all alabaster, and the lanterns along it are of chrysoprase, all night long they shine green, but of amethyst are the lanterns of the balconies.

“As the musicians go along the ways dancers gather about them and dance upon the alabaster pavings, for joy and not for hire. Sometimes a window opens far up in an ebony palace and a wreath is cast down to a dancer or orchids showered upon them.

“Indeed of many cities have I dreamt but of none fairer, through many marble metropolitan gates hasheesh has led me, but London is its secret, the last gate of all; the ivory bowl has nothing more to show. And indeed even now the imps that crawl behind me and that will not let me be are plucking me by the elbow and bidding my spirit return, for well they know that I have seen too much. ‘No, not London,’ they say; and therefore I will speak of some other city, a city of some less mysterious land, and anger not the imps with forbidden things. I will speak of Persepolis or famous Thebes.”

A shade of annoyance crossed the Sultan’s face, a look of thunder that you had scarcely seen, but in those lands they watched his visage well, and though his spirit was wandering far away and his eyes were bleared with

hasheesh yet that storyteller there and then perceived the look that was death, and sent his spirit back at once to London as a man runs into his house when the thunder comes.

"And therefore," he continued, "in the desiderate city, in London, all their camels are pure white. Remarkable is the swiftness of their horses, that draw their chariots that are of ivory along those sandy ways and that are of surpassing lightness, they have little bells of silver upon their horses' heads. O Friend of God, if you perceived their merchants! The glory of their dresses in the noonday! They are no less gorgeous than those butterflies that float about their streets. They have overcloaks of green and vestments of azure, huge purple flowers blaze on their overcloaks, the work of cunning needles, the centres of the flowers are of gold and the petals of purple. All their hats are black—" ("No, no," said the Sultan)— "but irises are set about the brims, and green plumes float above the crowns of them.

"They have a river that is named the Thames, on it their ships go up with violet sails bringing incense for the braziers that perfume the streets, new songs exchanged for gold with alien tribes, raw silver for the statues of their heroes, gold to make balconies where the women sit, great sapphires to reward their poets with, the secrets of old cities and strange lands, the earning of the dwellers in far isles, emeralds, diamonds, and the hoards of the sea. And whenever a ship comes into port and furls its violet sails and the news spreads through London that she has come, then all the merchants go down to the river to barter, and all day long the chariots whirl through the streets, and the sound of their going is a mighty roar all day until evening, their roar is even like—"

"Not so," said the Sultan.

"Truth is not hidden from the Friend of God," replied the hasheesh-eater, "I have erred being drunken with the hasheesh, for in the desiderate city, even in London, so thick upon the ways is the white sea-sand with which the city glimmers that no sound comes from the path of the charioteers, but they go softly like a light sea-wind." ("It is well," said the Sultan.) "They go softly down to the port where the vessels are, and the merchandise in from the sea, amongst the wonders that the sailors show, on land by the high ships, and softly they go though swiftly at evening back to their homes.

"O would that the Munificent, the Illustrious, the Friend of God, had even seen these things, had seen the jewellers with their empty baskets, bargaining there by the ships, when the barrels of emeralds came up from

the hold. Or would that he had seen the fountains there in silver basins in the midst of the ways. I have seen small spires upon their ebony houses and the spires were all of gold, birds strutted there upon the copper roofs from golden spire to spire that have no equal for splendour in all the woods of the world. And over London the desiderate city the sky is so deep a blue that by this alone the traveller may know where he has come, and may end his fortunate journey. Nor yet for any colour of the sky is there too great heat in London, for along its ways a wind blows always from the South gently and cools the city.

"Such, O Friend of God, is indeed the city of London, lying very far off on the yonder side of Bagdad, without a peer for beauty or excellence of its ways among the towns of the earth or cities of song; and even so, as I have told, its fortunate citizens dwell, with their hearts ever devising beautiful things and from the beauty of their own fair work that is more abundant around them every year, receiving new inspirations to work things more beautiful yet."

"And is their government good?" the Sultan said.

"It is most good," said the hasheesh-eater, and fell backwards upon the floor.

He lay thus and was silent. And when the Sultan perceived he would speak no more that night he smiled and lightly applauded.

And there was envy in that palace, in lands beyond Bagdad, of all that dwell in London.

Thirteen at Table

In front of a spacious fireplace of the old kind, when the logs were well alight, and men with pipes and glasses were gathered before it in great easeful chairs, and the wild weather outside and the comfort that was within, and the season of the year — for it was Christmas — and the hour of the night, all called for the weird or uncanny, then out spoke the ex-master of foxhounds and told this tale.

I once had an odd experience too. It was when I had the Bromley and Sydenham, the year I gave them up — as a matter of fact it was the last day of the season. It was no use going on because there were no foxes left in the county, and London was sweeping down on us. You could see it from the kennels all along the skyline like a terrible army in grey, and masses of villas every year came skirmishing down our valleys. Our coverts were mostly on the hills, and as the town came down upon the valleys the foxes used to leave them and go right away out of the county and they never returned. I think they went by night and moved great distances. Well it was early April and we had drawn blank all day, and at the last draw of all, the very last of the season, we found a fox. He left the covert with his back to London and its railways and villas and wire and slipped away towards the chalk country and open Kent. I felt as I once felt as a child on one summer's day when I found a door in a garden where I played left luckily ajar, and I pushed it open and the wide lands were before me and waving fields of corn.

We settled down into a steady gallop and the fields began to drift by under us, and a great wind arose full of fresh breath. We left the clay lands where the bracken grows and came to a valley at the edge of the chalk. As we went down into it we saw the fox go up the other side like a shadow that crosses the evening, and glide into a wood that stood on the top. We saw a flash of primroses in the wood and we were out the other side, hounds hunting perfectly and the fox still going absolutely straight. It began to dawn on me then that we were in for a great hunt, I took a deep breath when I thought of it; the taste of the air of that perfect Spring afternoon as it came to one galloping, and the thought of a great run, were together like some old rare wine. Our faces now were to another valley, large fields led down to it, with easy hedges, at the bottom of it a bright blue stream went singing and a

rambling village smoked, the sunlight on the opposite slopes danced like a fairy; and all along the top old woods were frowning, but they dreamed of Spring. The “field” had fallen of and were far behind and my only human companion was James, my old first whip, who had a hound’s instinct, and a personal animosity against a fox that even embittered his speech.

Across the valley the fox went as straight as a railway line, and again we went without a check straight through the woods at the top. I remember hearing men sing or shout as they walked home from work, and sometimes children whistled; the sounds came up from the village to the woods at the top of the valley. After that we saw no more villages, but valley after valley arose and fell before us as though we were voyaging some strange and stormy sea, and all the way before us the fox went dead up-wind like the fabulous Flying Dutchman. There was no one in sight now but my first whip and me, we had both of us got on to our second horses as we drew the last covert.

Two or three times we checked in those great lonely valleys beyond the village, but I began to have inspirations, I felt a strange certainty within me that this fox was going on straight up-wind till he died or until night came and we could hunt no longer, so I reversed ordinary methods and only cast straight ahead and always we picked up the scent again at once. I believe that this fox was the last one left in the villa-haunted lands and that he was prepared to leave them for remote uplands far from men, that if we had come the following day he would not have been there, and that we just happened to hit off his journey.

Evening began to descend upon the valleys, still the hounds drifted on, like the lazy but unresting shadows of clouds upon a summer’s day, we heard a shepherd calling to his dog, we saw two maidens move towards a hidden farm, one of them singing softly; no other sounds, but ours, disturbed the leisure and the loneliness of haunts that seemed not yet to have known the inventions of steam and gun-powder (even as China, they say, in some of her further mountains does not yet know that she has fought Japan).

And now the day and our horses were wearing out, but that resolute fox held on. I began to work out the run and to wonder where we were. The last landmark I had ever seen before must have been over five miles back and from there to the start was at least ten miles more. If only we could kill! Then the sun set. I wondered what chance we had of killing our fox. I

looked at James' face as he rode beside me. He did not seem to have lost any confidence yet his horse was as tired as mine. It was a good clear twilight and the scent was as strong as ever, and the fences were easy enough, but those valleys were terribly trying and they still rolled on and on. It looked as if the light would outlast all possible endurance both of the fox and the horses, if the scent held good and he did not go to ground, otherwise night would end it. For long we had seen no houses and no roads, only chalk slopes with the twilight on them, and here and there some sheep, and scattered copses darkening in the evening. At some moment I seemed to realise all at once that the light was spent and that darkness was hovering, I looked at James, he was solemnly shaking his head. Suddenly in a little wooded valley we saw climb over the oaks the red-brown gables of a queer old house, at that instant I saw the fox scarcely heading by fifty yards. We blundered through a wood into full sight of the house, but no avenue led up to it or even a path nor were there any signs of wheel-marks anywhere. Already lights shone here and there in windows. We were in a park, and a fine park, but unkempt beyond credibility; brambles grew everywhere. It was too dark to see the fox any more but we knew he was dead beat, the hounds were just before us, — and a four-foot railing of oak. I shouldn't have tried it on a fresh horse the beginning of a run, and here was a horse near his last gasp. But what a run! an event standing out in a lifetime, and the hounds close up on their fox, slipping into the darkness as I hesitated. I decided to try it. My horse rose about eight inches and took it fair with his breast, and the oak log flew into handfuls of wet decay — it rotten with years. And then we were on a lawn and at the far end of it the hounds were tumbling over their fox. Fox, hounds and light were all done together at the of a twenty-mile point. We made some noise then, but nobody came out of the queer old house.

I felt pretty stiff as I walked round to the hall door with the mask and the brush while James went with the hounds and the two horses to look for the stables. I rang a bell marvellously encrusted with rust, and after a long while the door opened a little way revealing a hall with much old armour in it and the shabbiest butler that I have ever known.

I asked him who lived there. Sir Richard Arlen. I explained that my horse could go no further that night and that I wished to ask Sir Richard Arlen for a bed for the night.

"O, no one ever comes here, sir," said the butler.

I pointed out that I had come.

"I don't think it would be possible, sir," he said.

This annoyed me and I asked to see Sir Richard, and insisted until he came. Then I apologised and explained the situation. He looked only fifty, but a 'Varsity oar on the wall with the date of the early seventies, made him older than that; his face had something of the shy look of the hermit; he regretted that he had not room to put me up. I was sure that this was untrue, also I had to be put up there, there was nowhere else within miles, so I almost insisted. Then to my astonishment he turned to the butler and they talked it over in an undertone. At last they seemed to think that they could manage it, though clearly with reluctance. It was by now seven o' clock and Sir Richard told me he dined at half past seven. There was no question of clothes for me other than those I stood in, as my host was shorter and broader. He showed me presently to the drawing-room and there he reappeared before half past seven in evening dress and a white waistcoat. The drawing-room was large and contained old furniture but it was rather worn than venerable, an Aubusson carpet flapped about the floor, the wind seemed momently to enter the room, and old draughts haunted corners; the stealthy feet of rats that were never at rest indicated the extent of the ruin that time had wrought in the wainscot; somewhere far off a shutter flapped to and fro, the guttering candles were insufficient to light so large a room. The gloom that these things suggested was quite in keeping with Sir Richard's first remark to me after he entered the room: "I must tell you, sir, that I have led a wicked life. O, a very wicked life."

Such confidences from a man much older than oneself after one has known him for half an hour are so rare that any possible answer merely does not suggest itself. I said rather slowly, "O, really," and chiefly to forestall another such remark I said "What a charming house you have."

"Yes," he said, "I have not left it for nearly forty years. Since I left the 'Varsity. One is young there, you know, and one has opportunities; but I make no excuses, no excuses." And the door slipping its rusty latch, came drifting on the draught into the room, and the long carpet flapped and the hangings upon the walls, then the draught fell rustling away and the door slammed to again.

"Ah, Marianne," he said, "we have a guest to-night. Mr. Linton. This is Marianne Gib." And everything became clear to me. "Mad," I said to myself, for no one had entered the room.

The rats ran up the length of the room behind the wainscot ceaselessly, and the wind unlatched the door again and the folds of the carpet fluttered up to our feet and stopped there, for our weight held it down.

"Let me introduce Mr. Linton," said my host— "Lady Mary Errinjer."

The door slammed back again. I bowed politely. Even had I been invited I should have humoured him, but it was the very least that an uninvited guest could do.

This kind of thing happened eleven times, the rustling, and the fluttering of the carpet and the footsteps of the rats, and the restless door, and then the sad voice of my host introducing me to phantoms. Then for some while we waited while I struggled with the situation; conversation flowed slowly. And again the draught came trailing up the room, while the flaring candles filled it with hurrying shadows. "Ah, late again, Cicely," said my host in his soft, mournful way. "Always late, Cicely." Then I went down to dinner with that man and his mind and the twelve phantoms that haunted it. I found a long table with fine old silver on it and places laid for fourteen. The butler was now in evening dress, there were fewer draughts in the dining-room, the scene was less gloomy there. "Will you sit next to Rosalind at the other end," Richard said to me. "She always takes the head of the table, I wronged her most of all." I said, "I shall be delighted."

I looked at the butler closely, but never did I see by any expression of his face or by anything that he did any suggestion that he waited upon less than fourteen people in the complete possession of all their faculties. Perhaps a dish appeared to be refused more often than taken but every glass was equally filled with champagne. At first I found little to say, but when Sir Richard speaking from the far end of the table said, "You are tired, Mr. Linton," I was reminded that I owed something to a host upon whom I had forced myself. It was excellent champagne and with the help of a second glass I made the effort to begin a conversation with a Miss Helen Errold for whom the place upon one side of me was laid. It came more easy to me very soon, I frequently paused in my monologue, like Mark Anthony, for a reply, and sometimes I turned and spoke to Miss Rosalind Smith. Sir Richard at the other end talked sorrowfully on, he spoke as a condemned man might speak to his judge, and yet somewhat as a judge might speak to one that he once condemned wrongly. My own mind began to turn to mournful things. I drank another glass of champagne, but I was still thirsty. I felt as if all the moisture in my body had been blown away over the downs

of Kent by the wind up which we had galloped. Still I was not talking enough; my host was looking at me. I made another effort, after all I had something to talk about, a twenty-mile point is not often seen in a lifetime, especially south of the Thames. I began to describe the run to Rosalind Smith. I could see then that my host was pleased, the sad look in his face gave a kind of a flicker, like mist upon the mountains on a miserable day when a faint puff comes from the sea and the mist would lift if it could. And the butler refilled my glass very attentively. I asked her first if she hunted, and paused and began my story. I told her where we had found the fox and how fast and straight he had gone, and how I had got through the village by keeping to the road, while the little gardens and wire, and then the river, had stopped the rest of the field. I told her the kind of country that we crossed and how splendid it looked in the Spring, and how mysterious the valleys were as soon as the twilight came, and what a glorious horse I had and how wonderfully he went. I was so fearfully thirsty after the great hunt that I had to stop for a moment now and then, but I went on with my description of that famous run, for I had warmed to the subject, and after all there was nobody to tell of it but me except my old whipper-in, and "the old fellow's probably drunk by now," I thought. I described to her minutely the exact spot in the run at which it had come to me clearly that this was going to be the greatest hunt in the whole history of Kent. Sometimes I forgot incidents that had happened as one well may in a run of twenty miles, and then I had to fill in the gaps by inventing. I was pleased to be able to make the party go off well by means of my conversation, and besides that the lady to whom I was speaking was extremely pretty: I do not mean in a flesh and blood kind of way but there were little shadowy lines about the chair beside me that hinted at an unusually graceful figure when Miss Rosalind Smith was alive; and I began to perceive that what I first mistook for the smoke of guttering candles and a table-cloth waving in the draught was in reality an extremely animated company who listened, and not without interest, to my story of by far the greatest hunt that the world had ever known: indeed I told them that I would confidently go further and predict that never in the history of the world would there be such a run again. Only my throat was terribly dry. And then as it seemed they wanted to hear more about my horse. I had forgotten that I had come there on a horse, but when they reminded me it all came back; they looked so charming leaning over the table intent upon what I said, that I told them everything they wanted to know. Everything was

going so pleasantly if only Sir Richard would cheer up. I heard his mournful voice every now and then — these were very pleasant people if only he would take them the right way. I could understand that he regretted his past, but the early seventies seemed centuries away and I felt sure that he misunderstood these ladies, they were not revengeful as he seemed to suppose. I wanted to show him how cheerful they really were, and so I made a joke and they an laughed at it, and then I chaffed them a bit, especially Rosalind, and nobody resented it in the very least. And still Sir Richard sat there with that unhappy look, like one that has ended weeping because it is vain and has not the consolation even of tears.

We had been a long time there and many of the candles had burned out, but there was light enough. I was glad to have an audience for my exploit, and being happy myself I was determined Sir Richard should be. I made more jokes and they still laughed good-naturedly; some of the jokes were a little broad perhaps but no harm was meant. And then — I do not wish to excuse myself — but I had had a harder day than I ever had had before and without knowing it I must have been completely exhausted; in this state the champagne had found me, and what would have been harmless at any other time must somehow have got the better of me when quite tired out — anyhow I went too far, I made some joke — I cannot in the least remember what — that suddenly seemed to offend them. I felt all at once a commotion in the air, I looked up and saw that they had all arisen from the table and were sweeping towards the door: I had not time to open it but it blew open on a wind, I could scarcely see what Sir Richard was doing because only two candles were left, I think the rest blew out when the ladies suddenly rose. I sprang up to apologise, to assure them — and then fatigue overcame me as it had overcome my horse at the last fence, I clutched at the table but the cloth came away and then I fell. The fall, and the darkness on the floor and the pent up fatigue of the day overcame me all three together.

The sun shone over glittering fields and in at a bedroom window and thousands of birds were chanting to the Spring, and there I was in an old four-poster bed in a quaint old panelled bedroom, fully dressed and wearing long muddy boots; someone had taken my spurs and that was all. For a moment I failed to realise and then it all came back, my enormity and the pressing need of an abject apology to Sir Richard. I pulled an embroidered bell rope until the butler came. He came in perfectly cheerful and indescribably shabby. I asked him if Sir Richard was up, and he said he had

just gone down, and told me to my amazement that it was twelve o'clock. I asked to be shown in to Sir Richard at once. He was in his smoking-room. "Good morning," he said cheerfully the moment I went in. I went directly to the matter in hand. "I fear that I insulted some ladies in your house—" I began.

"You did indeed," he said, "You did indeed." And then he burst into tears and took me by the hand. "How can I ever thank you?" he said to me then. "We have been thirteen at table for thirty years and I never dared to insult them because I had wronged them all, and now you have done it and I know they will never dine here again." And for a long time he still held my hand, and then he gave it a grip and a kind of a shake which I took to mean "Goodbye" and I drew my hand away then and left the house. And I found James in the stables with the hounds and asked him how he had fared, and James, who is a man of very few words, said he could not rightly remember, and I got my spurs from the butler and climbed on to my horse and slowly we rode away from that queer old house, and slowly we wended home, for the hounds were footsore but happy and the horses were tired still. And when we recalled that the hunting season was ended we turned our faces to Spring and thought of the new things that try to replace the old. And that very year I heard, and have often heard since, of dances and happier dinners at Sir Richard Arlen's house.

The City on Mallington Moor

Besides the old shepherd at Lingwold whose habits render him unreliable I am probably the only person that has ever seen the city on Mallington Moor.

I had decided one year to do no London season; partly because of the ugliness of the things in the shops, partly because of the unresisted invasions of German bands, partly perhaps because some pet parrots in the oblong where I lived had learned to imitate cab-whistles; but chiefly because of late there had seized me in London a quite unreasonable longing for large woods and waste spaces, while the very thought of little valleys underneath copses full of bracken and foxgloves was a torment to me and every summer in London the longing grew worse till the thing was becoming intolerable. So I took a stick and a knapsack and began walking northwards, starting at Tetherington and sleeping at inns, where one could get real salt, and the waiter spoke English and where one had a name instead of a number; and though the tablecloth might be dirty the windows opened so that the air was clean, where one had the excellent company of farmers and men of the wold, who could not be thoroughly vulgar, because they had not the money to be so even if they had wished it. At first the novelty was delightful, and then one day in a queer old inn up Uthering way, beyond Lingwold, I heard for the first time the rumour of the city said to be on Mallington Moor. They spoke of it quite casually over their glasses of beer, two farmers at the inn. “They say the queer folk be at Mallington with their city,” one farmer said. “Travelling they seem to be,” said the other. And more came in then and the rumour spread. And then, such are the contradictions of our little likes and dislikes and all the whims that drive us, that I, who had come so far to avoid cities, had a great longing all of a sudden for throngs again and the great hives of Man, and then and there determined on that bright Sunday morning to come to Mallington and there search for the city that rumour spoke of so strangely.

Mallington Moor, from all that they said of it, was hardly a likely place to find a thing by searching. It was a huge high moor, very bleak and desolate and altogether trackless. It seemed a lonely place from what they said. The Normans when they came had called it Mal Lieu and afterwards Mallintown and so it changed to Mallington. Though what a town can ever

have had to do with a place so utterly desolate I do not know. And before that some say that the Saxons called it Baplas, which I believe to be a corruption of Bad Place.

And beyond the mere rumour of a beautiful city all of white marble and with a foreign look up on Mallington Moor, beyond this I could not get. None of them had seen it himself, "only heard of it like," and my questions, rather than stimulating conversation, would always stop it abruptly. I was no more fortunate on the road to Mallington until the Tuesday, when I was quite near it; I had been walking two days from the inn where I had heard the rumour and could see the great hill steep as a headland on which Mallington lay, standing up on the skyline: the hill was covered with grass, where anything grew at all, but Mallington Moor is all heather; it is just marked Moor on the map; nobody goes there and they do not trouble to name it. It was there where the gaunt hill first came into sight, by the roadside as I enquired for the marble city of some labourers by the way, that I was directed, partly I think in derision, to the old shepherd of Lingwold. It appeared that he, following sometimes sheep that had strayed, and wandering far from Lingwold, came sometimes up to the edge of Mallington Moor, and that he would come back from these excursions and shout through the villages, raving of a city of white marble and gold-tipped minarets. And hearing me asking questions of this city they had laughed and directed me to the shepherd of Lingwold. One well-meant warning they gave me as I went — the old man was not reliable.

And late that evening I saw the thatches of Lingwold sheltering under the edge of that huge hill that Atlas-like held up those miles of moor to the great winds and heaven.

They knew less of the city in Lingwold than elsewhere but they knew the whereabouts of the man I wanted, though they seemed a little ashamed of him. There was an inn in Lingwold that gave me shelter, whence in the morning, equipped with purchases, I set out to find their shepherd. And there he was on the edge of Mallington Moor standing motionless, gazing stupidly at his sheep; his hands trembled continually and his eyes had a blear look, but he was quite sober, wherein all Lingwold had wronged him.

And then and there I asked him of the city and he said he had never heard tell of any such place. And I said, "Come, come, you must pull yourself together." And he looked angrily at me; but when he saw me draw from amongst my purchases a full bottle of whiskey and a big glass he

became more friendly. As I poured out the whiskey I asked him again about the marble city on Mallington Moor but he seemed quite honestly to know nothing about it. The amount of whiskey he drank was quite incredible, but I seldom express surprise and once more I asked him the way to the wonderful city. His hand was steadier now and his eyes more intelligent and he said that he had heard something of some such city, but his memory was evidently blurred and he was still unable to give me useful directions. I consequently gave him another tumbler, which he drank off like the first without any water, and almost at once he was a different man. The trembling in his hands stopped altogether, his eye became as quick as a younger man's, he answered my questions readily and frankly, and, what was more important to me still, his old memory became alert and clear for even minutest details. His gratitude to myself I need not mention, for I make no pretence that I bought the bottle of whiskey that the old shepherd enjoyed so much without at least some thought of my own advantage. Yet it was pleasant to reflect that it was due to me that he had pulled himself together and steadied his shaking hand and cleared his mind, recovered his memory and his self-respect. He spoke to me quite clearly, no longer slurring his words; he had seen the city first one moonlight night when he was lost in the mist on the big moor, he had wandered far in the mist, and when it lifted he saw the city by moonlight. He had no food, but luckily had his flask. There never was such a city, not even in books. Travellers talked sometimes of Venice seen from the sea, there might be such a place or there might not, but, whether or no, it was nothing to the city on Mallington Moor. Men who read books had talked to him in his time, hundreds of books, but they never could tell of any city like this. Why, the place was all of marble, roads, walls and palaces, all pure white marble, and the tops of the tall thin spires were entirely of gold. And they were queer folk in the city even for foreigners. And there were camels, but I cut him short for I thought I could judge for myself, if there was such a place, and, if not, I was wasting my time as well as a pint of good whiskey. So I got him to speak of the way, and after more circumlocution than I needed and more talk of the city he pointed to a tiny track on the black earth just beside us, a little twisty way you could hardly see.

I said the moor was trackless; untrodden of man or dog it certainly was and seemed to have less to do with the ways of man than any waste I have seen, but the track the old shepherd showed me, if track it was, was no more

than the track of a hare — an elf-path the old man called it, Heaven knows what he meant. And then before I left him he insisted on giving me his flask with the queer strong rum it contained. Whiskey brings out in some men melancholy, in some rejoicing, with him it was clearly generosity and he insisted until I took his rum, though I did not mean to drink it. It was lonely up there, he said, and bitter cold and the city hard to find, being set in a hollow, and I should need the rum, and he had never seen the marble city except on days when he had had his flask: he seemed to regard that rusted iron flask as a sort of mascot, and in the end I took it.

I followed that odd, faint track on the black earth under the heather till I came to the big grey stone beyond the horizon, where the track divides into two, and I took the one to the left as the old man told me. I knew by another stone that I saw far off that I had not lost my way, nor the old man lied.

And just as I hoped to see the city's ramparts before the gloaming fell on that desolate place, I suddenly saw a long high wall of whiteness with pinnacles here and there thrown up above it, floating towards me silent and grim as a secret, and knew it for that evil thing the mist. The sun, though low, was shining on every sprig of heather, the green and scarlet mosses were shining with it too, it seemed incredible that in three minutes' time all those colours would be gone and nothing left all round but a grey darkness. I gave up hope of finding the city that day, a broader path than mine could have been quite easily lost. I hastily chose for my bed a thick patch of heather, wrapped myself in a waterproof cloak, and lay down and made myself comfortable. And then the mist came. It came like the careful pulling of lace curtains, then like the drawing of grey blinds; it shut out the horizon to the north, then to the east and west; it turned the whole sky white and hid the moor; it came down on it like a metropolis, only utterly silent, silent and white as tombstones.

And then I was glad of that strange strong rum, or whatever it was in the flask that the shepherd gave me, for I did not think that the mist would clear till night, and I feared the night would be cold. So I nearly emptied the flask; and, sooner than I expected, I fell asleep, for the first night out as a rule one does not sleep at once but is kept awake some while by the little winds and the unfamiliar sound of the things that wander at night, and that cry to one another far-off with their queer, faint voices; one misses them afterwards when one gets to houses again. But I heard none of these sounds in the mist that evening.

And then I woke and found that the mist was gone and the sun was just disappearing under the moor, and I knew that I had not slept for as long as I thought. And I decided to go on while I could, for I thought that I was not very far from the city.

I went on and on along the twisty track, bits of the mist came down and filled the hollows but lifted again at once so that I saw my way. The twilight faded as I went, a star appeared, and I was able to see the track no longer. I could go no further that night, yet before I lay down to sleep I decided to go and look over the edge of a wide depression in the moor that I saw a little way off. So I left the track and walked a few hundred yards, and when I got to the edge the hollow was full of mist all white underneath me. Another star appeared and a cold wind arose, and with the wind the mist flapped away like a curtain. And there was the city.

Nothing the shepherd had said was the least untrue or even exaggerated. The poor old man had told the simple truth, there is not a city like it in the world. What he had called thin spires were minarets, but the little domes on the top were clearly pure gold as he said. There were the marble terraces he described and the pure white palaces covered with carving and hundreds of minarets. The city was obviously of the East and yet where there should have been crescents on the domes of the minarets there were golden suns with rays, and wherever one looked one saw things that obscured its origin. I walked down to it, and, passing through a wicket gate of gold in a low wall of white marble, I entered the city. The heather went right up to the city's edge and beat against the marble wall whenever the wind blew it. Lights began to twinkle from high windows of blue glass as I walked up the white street, beautiful copper lanterns were lit up and let down from balconies by silver chains, from doors ajar came the sound of voices singing, and then I saw the men. Their faces were rather grey than black, and they wore beautiful robes of coloured silk with hems embroidered with gold and some with copper, and sometimes pacing down the marble ways with golden baskets hung on each side of them I saw the camels of which the old shepherd spoke.

The people had kindly faces, but, though they were evidently friendly to strangers, I could not speak with them being ignorant of their language, nor were the sounds of the syllables they used like any language I had ever heard: they sounded more like grouse.

When I tried to ask them by signs whence they had come with their city they would only point to the moon, which was bright and full and was shining fiercely on those marble ways till the city danced in light. And now there began appearing one by one, slipping softly out through windows, men with stringed instruments in the balconies. They were strange instruments with huge bulbs of wood, and they played softly on them and very beautifully, and their queer voices softly sang to the music weird dirges of the griefs of their native land wherever that may be. And far off in the heart of the city others were singing too, the sound of it came to me wherever I roamed, not loud enough to disturb my thoughts, but gently turning the mind to pleasant things. Slender carved arches of marble, as delicate almost as lace, crossed and re-crossed the ways wherever I went. There was none of that hurry of which foolish cities boast, nothing ugly or sordid so far as I could see. I saw that it was a city of beauty and song. I wondered how they had travelled with all that marble, how they had laid it down on Mallington Moor, whence they had come and what their resources were, and determined to investigate closely next morning, for the old shepherd had not troubled his head to think how the city came, he had only noted that the city was there (and of course no one believed him, though that is partly his fault for his dissolute ways). But at night one can see little and I had walked all day, so I determined to find a place to rest in. And just as I was wondering whether to ask for shelter of those silk-robed men by signs or whether to sleep outside the walls and enter again in the morning, I came to a great archway in one of the marble houses with two black curtains, embroidered below with gold, hanging across it. Over the archway were carved apparently in many tongues the words: “Here strangers rest.” In Greek, Latin and Spanish the sentence was repeated and there was writing also in the language that you see on the walls of the great temples of Egypt, and Arabic and what I took to be early Assyrian and one or two languages I had never seen. I entered through the curtains and found a tesselated marble court with golden braziers burning sleepy incense swinging by chains from the roof, all round the walls were comfortable mattresses lying upon the floor covered with cloths and silks. It must have been ten o’clock and I was tired. Outside the music still softly filled the streets, a man had set a lantern down on the marble way, five or six sat down round him, and he was sonorously telling them a story. Inside there were some already asleep on the beds, in the middle of the wide court under

the braziers a woman dressed in blue was singing very gently, she did not move, but sung on and on, I never heard a song that was so soothing. I lay down on one of the mattresses by the wall, which was all inlaid with mosaics, and pulled over me some of the cloths with their beautiful alien work, and almost immediately my thoughts seemed part of the song that the woman was singing in the midst of the court under the golden braziers that hung from the high roof, and the song turned them to dreams, and so I fell asleep.

A small wind having arisen, I was awakened by a sprig of heather that beat continually against my face. It was morning on Mallington Moor, and the city was quite gone.

Why the Milkman Shudders When He Perceives the Dawn

In the Hall of the Ancient Company of Milkmen round the great fireplace at the end, when the winter logs are burning and all the craft are assembled they tell to-day, as their grandfathers told before them, why the milkman shudders when he perceives the dawn.

When dawn comes creeping over the edges of hills, peers through the tree-trunks making wonderful shadows, touches the tops of tall columns of smoke going up from awakening cottages in the valleys, and breaks all golden over Kentish fields, when going on tip-toe thence it comes to the walls of London and slips all shyly up those gloomy streets the milkman perceives it and shudders.

A man may be a Milkman's Working Apprentice, may know what borax is and how to mix it, yet not for that is the story told to him. There are five men alone that tell that story, five men appointed by the Master of the Company, by whom each place is filled as it falls vacant, and if you do not hear it from one of them you hear the story from no one and so can never know why the milkman shudders when he perceives the dawn.

It is the way of one of these five men, greybeards all and milkmen from infancy, to rub his hands by the fire when the great logs burn, and to settle himself more easily in his chair, perhaps to sip some drink far other than milk, then to look round to see that none are there to whom it would not be fitting the tale should be told and, looking from face to face and seeing none but the men of the Ancient Company, and questioning mutely the rest of the five with his eyes, if some of the five be there, and receiving their permission, to cough and to tell the tale. And a great hush falls in the Hall of the Ancient Company, and something about the shape of the roof and the rafters makes the tale resonant all down the hall so that the youngest hears it far away from the fire and knows, and dreams of the day when perhaps he will tell himself why the milkman shudders when he perceives the dawn.

Not as one tells some casual fact is it told, nor is it commented on from man to man, but it is told by that great fire only and when the occasion and the stillness of the room and the merit of the wine and the profit of all seem to warrant it in the opinion of the five deputed men: then does one of them tell it, as I have said, not heralded by any master of ceremonies but as

though it arose out of the warmth of the fire before which his knotted hands would chance to be; not a thing learned by rote, but told differently by each teller, and differently according to his mood, yet never has one of them dared to alter its salient points, there is none so base among the Company of Milkmen. The Company of Powderers for the Face know of this story and have envied it, the Worthy Company of Chin-Barbers, and the Company of Whiskerers; but none have heard it in the Milkmen's Hall, through whose wall no rumour of the secret goes, and though they have invented tales of their own Antiquity mocks them.

This mellow story was ripe with honourable years when milkmen wore beaver hats, its origin was still mysterious when smocks were the vogue, men asked one another when Stuarts were on the throne (and only the Ancient Company knew the answer) why the milkman shudders when he perceives the dawn. It is all for envy of this tale's reputation that the Company of Powderers for the Face have invented the tale that they too tell of an evening, "Why the Dog Barks when he hears the step of the Baker"; and because probably all men know that tale the Company of the Powderers for the Face have dared to consider it famous. Yet it lacks mystery and is not ancient, is not fortified with classical allusion, has no secret lore, is common to all who care for an idle tale, and shares with "The Wars of the Elves," the Calf-butcher's tale, and "The Story of the Unicorn and the Rose," which is the tale of the Company of Horse-drivers, their obvious inferiority.

But unlike all these tales so new to time, and many another that the last two centuries tell, the tale that the milkmen tell ripples wisely on, so full of quotation from the profoundest writers, so full of recondite allusion, so deeply tinged with all the wisdom of man and instructive with the experience of all times that they that hear it in the Milkmen's Hall as they interpret allusion after allusion and trace obscure quotation lose idle curiosity and forget to question why the milkman shudders when he perceives the dawn.

You also, O my reader, give not yourself up to curiosity. Consider of how many it is the bane. Would you to gratify this tear away the mystery from the Milkmen's Hall and wrong the Ancient Company of Milkmen? Would they if all the world knew it and it became a common thing to tell that tale any more that they have told for the last four hundred years? Rather a silence would settle upon their hall and a universal regret for the ancient

tale and the ancient winter evenings. And though curiosity were a proper consideration yet even then this is not the proper place nor this the proper occasion for the Tale. For the proper place is only the Milkmen's Hall and the proper occasion only when logs burn well and when wine has been deeply drunken, then when the candles were burning well in long rows down to the dimness, down to the darkness and mystery that lie at the end of the hall, then were you one of the Company, and were I one of the five, would I rise from my seat by the fireside and tell you with all the embellishments that it has gleaned from the ages that story that is the heirloom of the milkmen. And the long candles would burn lower and lower and gutter and gutter away till they liquefied in their sockets, and draughts would blow from the shadowy end of the hall stronger and stronger till the shadows came after them, and still I would hold you with that treasured story, not by any wit of mine but all for the sake of its glamour and the times out of which it came; one by one the candles would flare and die and, when all were gone, by the light of ominous sparks when each milkman's face looks fearful to his fellow, you would know, as now you cannot, why the milkman shudders when he perceives the dawn.

The Bad Old Woman in Black

The bad old woman in black ran down the street of the ox-butchers.

Windows at once were opened high up in those crazy gables; heads were thrust out: it was she. Then there arose the counsel of anxious voices, calling sideways from window to window or across to opposite houses. Why was she there with her sequins and bugles and old black gown? Why had she left her dreaded house? On what fell errand she hasted?

They watched her lean, lithe figure, and the wind in that old black dress, and soon she was gone from the cobbled street and under the town's high gateway. She turned at once to her right and was hid from the view of the houses. Then they all ran down to their doors, and small groups formed on the pavement; there they took counsel together, the eldest speaking first. Of what they had seen they said nothing, for there was no doubt it was she; it was of the future they spoke, and the future only.

In what notorious thing would her errand end? What gains had tempted her out from her fearful home? What brilliant but sinful scheme had her genius planned? Above all, what future evil did this portend? Thus at first it was only questions. And then the old grey-beards spoke, each one to a little group; they had seen her out before, had known her when she was younger, and had noted the evil things that had followed her goings: the small groups listened well to their low and earnest voices. No one asked questions now or guessed at her infamous errand, but listened only to the wise old men who knew the things that had been, and who told the younger men of the dooms that had come before.

Nobody knew how many times she had left her dreaded house; but the oldest recounted all the times that they knew, and the way she had gone each time, and the doom that had followed her going; and two could remember the earthquake that there was in the street of the shearers.

So were there many tales of the times that were, told on the pavement near the old green doors by the edge of the cobbled street, and the experience that the aged men had bought with their white hairs might be had cheap by the young. But from all their experience only this was clear, that never twice in their lives had she done the same infamous thing, and that the same calamity twice had never followed her goings. Therefore it seemed that means were doubtful and few for finding out what thing was

about to befall; and an ominous feeling of gloom came down on the street of the ox-butchers. And in the gloom grew fears of the very worst. This comfort they only had when they put their fear into words — that the doom that followed her goings had never yet been anticipated. One feared that with magic she meant to move the moon; and he would have dammed the high tide on the neighbouring coast, knowing that as the moon attracted the sea the sea must attract the moon, and hoping by his device to humble her spells. Another would have fetched iron bars and clamped them across the street, remembering the earthquake there was in the street of the shearers. Another would have honoured his household gods, the little cat-faced idols seated above his hearth, gods to whom magic was no unusual thing, and, having paid their fees and honoured them well, would have put the whole case before them. His scheme found favour with many, and yet at last was rejected, for others ran indoors and brought out their gods, too, to be honoured, till there was a herd of gods all seated there on the pavement; yet would they have honoured them and put their case before them but that a fat man ran up last of all, carefully holding under a reverent arm his own two hound-faced gods, though he knew well — as, indeed, all men must — that they were notoriously at war with the little cat-faced idols. And although the animosities natural to faith had all been lulled by the crisis, yet a look of anger had come into the cat-like faces that no one dared disregard, and all perceived that if they stayed a moment longer there would be flaming around them the jealousy of the gods; so each man hastily took his idols home, leaving the fat man insisting that his hound-faced gods should be honoured.

Then there were schemes again and voices raised in debate, and many new dangers feared and new plans made.

But in the end they made no defence against danger, for they knew not what it would be, but wrote upon parchment as a warning, and in order that all might know: "*The bad old woman in black ran down the street of the ox-butchers.*"

The Bird of the Difficult Eye

Observant men and women that know their Bond Street well will appreciate my astonishment when in a jewellers' shop I perceived that nobody was furtively watching me. Not only this but when I even picked up a little carved crystal to examine it no shop-assistants crowded round me. I walked the whole length of the shop, still no one politely followed.

Seeing from this that some extraordinary revolution had occurred in the jewelry business I went with my curiosity well aroused to a queer old person half demon and half man who has an idol-shop in a byway of the City and who keeps me informed of affairs at the Edge of the World. And briefly over a pinch of heather incense that he takes by way of snuff he gave me this tremendous information: that Mr. Neepy Thang the son of Thangobrind had returned from the Edge of the World and was even now in London.

The information may not appear tremendous to those unacquainted with the source of jewelry; but when I say that the only thief employed by any West-end jeweller since famous Thangobrind's distressing doom is this same Neepy Thang, and that for lightness of fingers and swiftness of stockinged foot they have none better in Paris, it will be understood why the Bond Street jewellers no longer cared what became of their old stock.

There were big diamonds in London that summer and a few considerable sapphires. In certain astounding kingdoms behind the East strange sovereigns missed from their turbans the heirlooms of ancient wars, and here and there the keepers of crown jewels who had not heard the stockinged feet of Thang, were questioned and died slowly.

And the jewellers gave a little dinner to Thang at the Hotel Great Magnificent; the windows had not been opened for five years and there was wine at a guinea a bottle that you could not tell from champagne and cigars at half a crown with a Havana label. Altogether it was a splendid evening for Thang.

But I have to tell of a far sadder thing than a dinner at a hotel. The public require jewelry and jewelry must be obtained. I have to tell of Neepy Thang's last journey.

That year the fashion was emeralds. A man named Green had recently crossed the Channel on a bicycle and the jewellers said that a green stone

would be particularly appropriate to commemorate the event and recommended emeralds.

Now a certain money-lender of Cheapside who had just been made a peer had divided his gains into three equal parts; one for the purchase of the peerage, country house and park, and the twenty thousand pheasants that are absolutely essential, and one for the upkeep of the position, while the third he banked abroad, partly to cheat the native tax-gatherer and partly because it seemed to him that the days of the Peerage were few and that he might at any moment be called upon to start afresh elsewhere. In the upkeep of the position he included jewelry for his wife and so it came about that Lord Castlenorman placed an order with two well-known Bond-street jewellers named Messrs. Grosvenor and Campbell to the extent of £100,000 for a few reliable emeralds.

But the emeralds in stock were mostly small and shop-soiled and Neepy Thang had to set out at once before he had had as much as a week in London. I will briefly sketch his project. Not many knew it, for where the form of business is blackmail the fewer creditors you have the better (which of course in various degrees applies at all times).

On the shores of the risky seas of Shiroora Shan grows one tree only so that upon its branches if anywhere in the world there must build its nest the Bird of the Difficult Eye. Neepy Thang had come by this information, which was indeed the truth, that if the bird migrated to Fairyland before the three eggs hatched out they would undoubtedly all turn into emeralds, while if they hatched out first it would be a bad business.

When he had mentioned these eggs to Messrs. Grosvenor and Campbell they had said, “The very thing”: they were men of few words, in English, for it was not their native tongue.

So Neepy Thang set out. He bought the purple ticket at Victoria Station. He went by Herne Hill, Bromley and Bickley and passed St. Mary Cray. At Eynsford he changed and taking a footpath along a winding valley went wandering into the hills. And at the top of a hill in a little wood, where all the anemones long since were over and the perfume of mint and thyme from outside came drifting in with Thang, he found once more the familiar path, age-old and fair as wonder, that leads to the Edge of the World. Little to him were its sacred memories that are one with the secret of earth, for he was on business, and little would they be to me if I ever put them on paper. Let it suffice that he went down that path going further and further from the

fields we know, and all the way he muttered to himself, “What if the eggs hatch out and it be a bad business!” The glamour that is at all times upon those lonely lands that lie at the back of the chalky hills of Kent intensified as he went upon his journeys. Queerer and queerer grew the things that he saw by little World-End Path. Many a twilight descended upon that journey with all their mysteries, many a blaze of stars; many a morning came flaming up to a tinkle of silvern horns; till the outpost elves of Fairyland came in sight and the glittering crests of Fairyland’s three mountains betokened the journey’s end. And so with painful steps (for the shores of the world are covered with huge crystals) he came to the risky seas of Shiroora Shan and saw them pounding to gravel the wreckage of fallen stars, saw them and heard their roar, those shipless seas that between earth and the fairies’ homes heave beneath some huge wind that is none of our four. And there in the darkness on the grizzly coast, for darkness was swooping slantwise down the sky as though with some evil purpose, there stood that lonely, gnarled and deciduous tree. It was a bad place to be found in after dark, and night descended with multitudes of stars, beasts prowling in the blackness gluttered [See any dictionary, but in vain.] at Neepy Thang. And there on a lower branch within easy reach he clearly saw the Bird of the Difficult Eye sitting upon the nest for which she is famous. Her face was towards those three inscrutable mountains, far-off on the other side of the risky seas, whose hidden valleys are Fairyland. Though not yet autumn in the fields we know, it was close on midwinter here, the moment as Thang knew when those eggs hatch out. Had he miscalculated and arrived a minute too late? Yet the bird was even now about to migrate, her pinions fluttered and her gaze was toward Fairyland. Thang hoped and muttered a prayer to those pagan gods whose spite and vengeance he had most reason to fear. It seems that it was too late or a prayer too small to placate them, for there and then the stroke of midwinter came and the eggs hatched out in the roar of Shiroora Shan or ever the bird was gone with her difficult eye and it was a bad business indeed for Neepy Thang; I haven’t the heart to tell you any more.

“’Ere,” said Lord Castlenorman some few weeks later to Messrs. Grosvenor and Campbell, “you aren’t ‘arf taking your time about those emeralds.”

The Long Porter's Tale

There are things that are known only to the long porter of Tong Tong Tarrup as he sits and mumbles memories to himself in the little bastion gateway.

He remembers the war there was in the halls of the gnomes; and how the fairies came for the opals once, which Tong Tong Tarrup has; and the way that the giants went through the fields below, he watching from his gateway: he remembers quests that are even yet a wonder to the gods. Who dwells in those frozen houses on the high bare brink of the world not even he has told me, and he is held to be garrulous. Among the elves, the only living things ever seen moving at that awful altitude where they quarry turquoise on Earth's highest crag, his name is a byword for loquacity wherewith they mock the talkative.

His favourite story if you offer him bash — the drug of which he is fondest, and for which he will give his service in war to the elves against the goblins, or vice-versa if the goblins bring him more — his favourite story, when bodily soothed by the drug and mentally fiercely excited, tells of a quest undertaken ever so long ago for nothing more marketable than an old woman's song.

Picture him telling it. An old man, lean and bearded, and almost monstrously long, that lolled in a city's gateway on a crag perhaps ten miles high; the houses for the most part facing eastward, lit by the sun and moon and the constellations we know, but one house on the pinnacle looking over the edge of the world and lit by the glimmer of those unearthly spaces where one long evening wears away the stars: my little offering of bash; a long forefinger that nipped it at once on a stained and greedy thumb — all these are in the foreground of the picture. In the background, the mystery of those silent houses and of not knowing who their denizens were, or what service they had at the hands of the long porter and what payment he had in return, and whether he was mortal.

Picture him in the gateway of this incredible town, having swallowed my bash in silence, stretch his great length, lean back, and begin to speak.

It seems that one clear morning a hundred years ago, a visitor to Tong Tong Tarrup was climbing up from the world. He had already passed above the snow and had set his foot on a step of the earthward stairway that goes down from Tong Tong Tarrup on to the rocks, when the long porter saw

him. And so painfully did he climb those easy steps that the grizzled man on watch had long to wonder whether or not the stranger brought him bash, the drug that gives a meaning to the stars and seems to explain the twilight. And in the end there was not a scrap of bash, and the stranger had nothing better to offer that grizzled man than his mere story only.

It seems that the stranger's name was Gerald Jones, and he always lived in London; but once as a child he had been on a Northern moor. It was so long ago that he did not remember how, only somehow or other he walked alone on the moor, and all the ling was in flower. There was nothing in sight but ling and heather and bracken, except, far off near the sunset, on indistinct hills, there were little vague patches that looked like the fields of men. With evening a mist crept up and hid the hills, and still he went walking on over the moor. And then he came to the valley, a tiny valley in the midst of the moor, whose sides were incredibly steep. He lay down and looked at it through the roots of the ling. And a long, long way below him, in a garden by a cottage, with hollyhocks all round her that were taller than herself, there sat an old woman on a wooden chair, singing in the evening. And the man had taken a fancy to the song and remembered it after in London, and whenever it came to his mind it made him think of evenings — the kind you don't get in London — and he heard a soft wind going idly over the moor and the bumble-bees in a hurry, and forgot the noise of the traffic. And always, whenever he heard men speak of Time, he grudged to Time most this song. Once afterwards he went to that Northern moor again and found the tiny valley, but there was no old woman in the garden, and no one was singing a song. And either regret for the song that the old woman had sung, on a summer evening twenty years away and daily receding, troubled his mind, or else the wearisome work that he did in London, for he worked for a great firm that was perfectly useless; and he grew old early, as men do in cities. And at last, when melancholy brought only regret and the uselessness of his work gained round him with age, he decided to consult a magician. So to a magician he went and told him his troubles, and particularly he told him how he had heard the song. "And now," he said, "it is nowhere in the world."

"Of course it is not in the world," the magician said, "but over the Edge of the World you may easily find it." And he told the man that he was suffering from flux of time and recommended a day at the Edge of the World. Jones asked what part of the Edge of the World he should go to, and

the magician had heard Tong Tong Tarrup well spoken of; so he paid him, as is usual, in opals, and started at once on the journey. The ways to that town are winding; he took the ticket at Victoria Station that they only give if they know you: he went past Bleth: he went along the Hills of Neol-Hungar and came to the Gap of Poy. All these are in that part of the world that pertains to the fields we know; but beyond the Gap of Poy on those ordinary plains, that so closely resemble Sussex, one first meets the unlikely. A line of common grey hills, the Hills of Sneg, may be seen at the edge of the plain from the Gap of Poy; it is there that the incredible begins, infrequently at first, but happening more and more as you go up the hills. For instance, descending once into Poy Plains, the first thing that I saw was an ordinary shepherd watching a flock of ordinary sheep. I looked at them for some time and nothing happened, when, without a word, one of the sheep walked up to the shepherd and borrowed his pipe and smoked it — an incident that struck me as unlikely; but in the Hills of Sneg I met an honest politician. Over these plains went Jones and over the Hills of Sneg, meeting at first unlikely things, and then incredible things, till he came to the long slope beyond the hills that leads up to the Edge of the World, and where, as all guidebooks tell, anything may happen. You might at the foot of this slope see here and there things that could conceivably occur in the fields we know; but soon these disappeared, and the traveller saw nothing but fabulous beasts, browsing on flowers as astounding as themselves, and rocks so distorted that their shapes had clearly a meaning, being too startling to be accidental. Even the trees were shockingly unfamiliar, they had so much to say, and they leant over to one another whenever they spoke and struck grotesque attitudes and leered. Jones saw two fir-trees fighting. The effect of these scenes on his nerves was very severe; still he climbed on, and was much cheered at last by the sight of a primrose, the only familiar thing he had seen for hours, but it whistled and skipped away. He saw the unicorns in their secret valley. Then night in a sinister way slipped over the sky, and there shone not only the stars, but lesser and greater moons, and he heard dragons rattling in the dark.

With dawn there appeared above him among its amazing crags the town of Tong Tong Tarrup, with the light on its frozen stairs, a tiny cluster of houses far up in the sky. He was on the steep mountain now: great mists were leaving it slowly, and revealing, as they trailed away, more and more astonishing things. Before the mist had all gone he heard quite near him, on

what he had thought was bare mountain, the sound of a heavy galloping on turf. He had come to the plateau of the centaurs. And all at once he saw them in the mist: there they were, the children of fable, five enormous centaurs. Had he paused on account of any astonishment he had not come so far: he strode on over the plateau, and came quite near to the centaurs. It is never the centaurs' wont to notice men; they pawed the ground and shouted to one another in Greek, but they said no word to him. Nevertheless they turned and stared at him when he left them, and when he had crossed the plateau and still went on, all five of them cantered after to the edge of their green land; for above the high green plateau of the centaurs is nothing but naked mountains, and the last green thing that is seen by the mountaineer as he travels to Tong Tong Tarrup is the grass that the centaurs trample. He came into the snow fields that the mountain wears like a cape, its head being bare above it, and still climbed on. The centaurs watched him with increasing wonder.

Not even fabulous beasts were near him now, nor strange demoniac trees — nothing but snow and the clean bare crag above it on which was Tong Tong Tarrup. All day he climbed and evening found him above the snow-line; and soon he came to the stairway cut in the rock and in sight of that grizzled man, the long porter of Tong Tong Tarrup, sitting mumbling amazing memories to himself and expecting in vain from the stranger a gift of bash.

It seems that as soon as the stranger arrived at the bastion gateway, tired though he was, he demanded lodgings at once that commanded a good view of the Edge of the World. But the long porter, that grizzled man, disappointed of his bash, demanded the stranger's story to add to his memories before he would show him the way. And this is the story, if the long porter has told me the truth and if his memory is still what it was. And when the story was told, the grizzled man arose, and, dangling his musical keys, went up through door after door and by many stairs and led the stranger to the top-most house, the highest roof in the world, and in its parlour showed him the parlour window. There the tired stranger sat down in a chair and gazed out of the window sheer over the Edge of the World. The window was shut, and in its glittering panes the twilight of the World's Edge blazed and danced, partly like glow-worms' lamps and partly like the sea; it went by rippling, full of wonderful moons. But the traveller did not look at the wonderful moons. For from the abyss there grew with their roots

in far constellations a row of hollyhocks, and amongst them a small green garden quivered and trembled as scenes tremble in water; higher up, ling in bloom was floating upon the twilight, more and more floated up till all the twilight was purple; the little green garden low down was hung in the midst of it. And the garden down below, and the ling all round it, seemed all to be trembling and drifting on a song. For the twilight was full of a song that sang and rang along the edges of the World, and the green garden and the ling seemed to flicker and ripple with it as the song rose and fell, and an old woman was singing it down in the garden. A bumble-bee sailed across from over the Edge of the World. And the song that was lapping there against the coasts of the World, and to which the stars were dancing, was the same that he had heard the old woman sing long since down in the valley in the midst of the Northern moor.

But that grizzled man, the long porter, would not let the stranger stay, because he brought him no bash, and impatiently he shouldered him away, himself not troubling to glance through the World's outermost window, for the lands that Time afflicts and the spaces that Time knows not are all one to that grizzled man, and the bash that he eats more profoundly astounds his mind than anything man can show him either in the World we know or over the Edge. And, bitterly protesting, the traveller went back and down again to the World.

* * * * *

Accustomed as I am to the incredible from knowing the Edge of the World, the story presents difficulties to me. Yet it may be that the devastation wrought by Time is merely local, and that outside the scope of his destruction old songs are still being sung by those that we deem dead. I try to hope so. And yet the more I investigate the story that the long porter told me in the town of Tong Tong Tarrup the more plausible the alternative theory appears — that that grizzled man is a liar.

The Loot of Loma

Coming back laden with the loot of Loma, the four tall men looked earnestly to the right; to the left they durst not, for the precipice there that had been with them so long went sickly down on to a bank of clouds, and how much further below that only their fears could say.

Loma lay smoking, a city of ruin, behind them, all its defenders dead; there was no one left to pursue them, and yet their Indian instincts told them that all was scarcely well. They had gone three days along that narrow ledge: mountain quite smooth, incredible, above them, and precipice as smooth and as far below. It was chilly there in the mountains; at night a stream or a wind in the gloom of the chasm below them went like a whisper; the stillness of all things else began to wear the nerve — an enemy's howl would have braced them; they began to wish their perilous path were wider, they began to wish that they had not sacked Loma.

Had that path been any wider the sacking of Loma must indeed have been harder for them, for the citizens must have fortified the city but that the awful narrowness of that ten-league pass of the hills had made their crag-surrounded city secure. And at last an Indian had said, "Come, let us sack it." Grimly they laughed in the wigwams. Only the eagles, they said, had ever seen it, its hoard of emeralds and its golden gods; and one had said he would reach it, and they answered, "Only the eagles."

It was Laughing Face who said it, and who gathered thirty braves and led them into Loma with their tomahawks and their bows; there were only four left now, but they had the loot of Loma on a mule. They had four golden gods, a hundred emeralds, fifty-two rubies, a large silver gong, two sticks of malachite with amethyst handles for holding incense at religious feasts, four beakers one foot high, each carved from a rose-quartz crystal; a little coffer carved out of two diamonds, and (had they but known it) the written curse of a priest. It was written on parchment in an unknown tongue, and had been slipped in with the loot by a dying hand.

From either end of that narrow, terrible ledge the third night was closing in; it was dropping down on them from the heights of the mountain and slipping up to them out of the abyss, the third night since Loma blazed and they had left it. Three more days of tramping should bring them in triumph home, and yet their instincts said that all was scarcely well. We who sit at

home and draw the blinds and shut the shutters as soon as night appears, who gather round the fire when the wind is wild, who pray at regular seasons and in familiar shrines, know little of the demoniac look of night when it is filled with curses of false, infuriated gods. Such a night was this. Though in the heights the fleecy clouds were idle, yet the wind was stirring mournfully in the abyss and moaning as it stirred, unhappily at first and full of sorrow; but as day turned away from that awful path a very definite menace entered its voice which fast grew louder and louder, and night came on with a long howl. Shadows repeatedly passed over the stars, and then a mist fell swiftly, as though there were something suddenly to be done and utterly to be hidden, as in very truth there was.

And in the chill of that mist the four tall men prayed to their totems, the whimsical wooden figures that stood so far away, watching the pleasant wigwams; the firelight even now would be dancing over their faces, while there would come to their ears delectable tales of war. They halted upon the pass and prayed, and waited for any sign. For a man's totem may be in the likeness perhaps of an otter, and a man may pray, and if his totem be placable and watching over his man a noise may be heard at once like the noise that the otter makes, though it be but a stone that falls on another stone; and the noise is a sign. The four men's totems that stood so far away were in the likeness of the coney, the bear, the heron, and the lizard. They waited, and no sign came. With all the noises of the wind in the abyss, no noise was like the thump that the coney makes, nor the bear's growl, nor the heron's screech, nor the rustle of the lizard in the reeds.

It seemed that the wind was saying something over and over again, and that that thing was evil. They prayed again to their totems, and no sign came. And then they knew that there was some power that night that was prevailing against the pleasant carvings on painted poles of wood with the firelight on their faces so far away. Now it was clear that the wind was saying something, some very, very dreadful thing in a tongue that they did not know. They listened, but they could not tell what it said. Nobody could have said from seeing their faces how much the four tall men desired the wigwams again, desired the camp-fire and the tales of war and the benignant totems that listened and smiled in the dusk: nobody could have seen how well they knew that this was no common night or wholesome mist.

When at last no answer came nor any sign from their totems, they pulled out of the bag those golden gods that Loma gave not up except in flames and when all her men were dead. They had large ruby eyes and emerald tongues. They set them down upon that mountain pass, the cross-legged idols with their emerald tongues; and having placed between them a few decent yards, as it seemed meet there should be between gods and men, they bowed them down and prayed in their desperate straits in that dank, ominous night to the gods they had wronged, for it seemed that there was a vengeance upon the hills and that they would scarce escape, as the wind knew well. And the gods laughed, all four, and wagged their emerald tongues; the Indians saw them, though the night had fallen and though the mist was low. The four tall men leaped up at once from their knees and would have left the gods upon the pass but that they feared some hunter of their tribe might one day find them and say of Laughing Face, "He fled and left behind his golden gods," and sell the gold and come with his wealth to the wigwams and be greater than Laughing Face and his three men. And then they would have cast the gods away, down the abyss, with their eyes and their emerald tongues, but they knew that enough already they had wronged Loma's gods, and feared that vengeance enough was waiting them on the hills. So they packed them back in the bag on the frightened mule, the bag that held the curse they knew nothing of, and so pushed on into the menacing night. Till midnight they plodded on and would not sleep; grimmer and grimmer grew the look of the night, and the wind more full of meaning, and the mule knew and trembled, and it seemed that the wind knew, too, as did the instincts of those four tall men, though they could not reason it out, try how they would.

And though the squaws waited long where the pass winds out of the mountains, near where the wigwams are upon the plains, the wigwams and the totems and the fire, and though they watched by day, and for many nights uttered familiar calls, still did they never see those four tall men emerge out of the mountains any more, even though they prayed to their totems upon their painted poles; but the curse in the mystical writing that they had unknown in their bag worked there on that lonely pass six leagues from the ruins of Loma, and nobody can tell us what it was.

The Secret of the Sea

In an ill-lit ancient tavern that I know, are many tales of the sea; but not without the wine of Gorgondy, that I had of a private bargain from the gnomes, was the tale laid bare for which I had waited of an evening for the greater part of a year.

I knew my man and listened to his stories, sitting amid the bluster of his oaths; I plied him with rum and whiskey and mixed drinks, but there never came the tale for which I sought, and as a last resort I went to the Huthneth Mountains and bargained there all night with the chiefs of the gnomes.

When I came to the ancient tavern and entered the low-roofed room, bringing the hoard of the gnomes in a bottle of hammered iron, my man had not yet arrived. The sailors laughed at my old iron bottle, but I sat down and waited; had I opened it then they would have wept and sung. I was well content to wait, for I knew my man had the story, and it was such a one as had profoundly stirred the incredulity of the faithless.

He entered and greeted me, and sat down and called for brandy. He was a hard man to turn from his purpose, and, uncorking my iron bottle, I sought to dissuade him from brandy for fear that when the brandy, bit his throat he should refuse to leave it for any other wine. He lifted his head and said deep and dreadful things of any man that should dare to speak against brandy.

I swore that I said nothing against brandy but added that it was often given to children, while Gorgondy was only drunk by men of such depravity that they had abandoned sin because all the usual vices had come to seem genteel. When he asked if Gorgondy was a bad wine to drink I said that it was so bad that if a man sipped it that was the one touch that made damnation certain. Then he asked me what I had in the iron bottle, and I said it was Gorgondy; and then he shouted for the largest tumbler in that ill-lit ancient tavern, and stood up and shook his fist at me when it came, and swore, and told me to fill it with the wine that I got on that bitter night from the treasure house of the gnomes.

As he drank it he told me that he had met men who had spoken against wine, and that they had mentioned Heaven; and therefore he would not go there — no, not he; and that once he had sent one of them to Hell, but when he got there he would turn him out, and he had no use for milksops.

Over the second tumbler he was thoughtful, but still he said no word of the tale he knew, until I feared that it would never be heard. But when the third glass of that terrific wine had burned its way down his gullet, and vindicated the wickedness of the gnomes, his reticence withered like a leaf in the fire, and he bellowed out the secret.

I had long known that there is in ships a will or way of their own, and had even suspected that when sailors die or abandon their ships at sea, a derelict, being left to her own devices, may seek her own ends; but I had never dreamed by night, or fancied during the day, that the ships had a god that they worshipped, or that they secretly slipped away to a temple in the sea.

Over the fourth glass of the wine that the gnomes so sinfully brew but have kept so wisely from man, until the bargain that I had with their elders all through that autumn night, the sailor told me the story. I do not tell it as he told it to me because of the oaths that were in it; nor is it from delicacy that I refrain from writing these oaths verbatim, but merely because the horror they caused in me at the time troubles me still whenever I put them on paper, and I continue to shudder until I have blotted them out. Therefore, I tell the story in my own words, which, if they possess a certain decency that was not in the mouth of that sailor, unfortunately do not smack, as his did, of rum and blood and the sea.

You would take a ship to be a dead thing like a table, as dead as bits of iron and canvas and wood. That is because you always live on shore, and have never seen the sea, and drink milk. Milk is a more accursed drink than water.

What with the captain and what with the man at the wheel, and what with the crew, a ship has no fair chance of showing a will of her own.

There is only one moment in the history of ships, that carry crews on board, when they act by their own free will. This moment comes when all the crew are drunk. As the last man falls drunk on to the deck, the ship is free of man, and immediately slips away. She slips away at once on a new course and is never one yard out in a hundred miles.

It was like this one night with the Sea-Fancy. Bill Smiles was there himself, and can vouch for it. Bill Smiles has never told this tale before for fear that anyone should call him a liar. Nobody dislikes being hung as much as Bill Smiles would, but he won’t be called a liar. I tell the tale as I heard it, relevancies and irrelevancies, though in my more decent words; and as I

made no doubts of the truth of it then, I hardly like to now; others can please themselves.

It is not often that the whole of a crew is drunk. The crew of the Sea-Fancy was no drunkener than others. It happened like this.

The captain was always drunk. One day a fancy he had that some spiders were plotting against him, or a sudden bleeding he had from both his ears, made him think that drinking might be bad for his health. Next day he signed the pledge. He was sober all that morning and all the afternoon, but at evening he saw a sailor drinking a a glass of beer, and a fit of madness seized him, and he said things that seemed bad to Bill Smiles. And next morning he made all of them take the pledge.

For two days nobody had a drop to drink, unless you count water, and on the third morning the captain was quite drunk. It stood to reason they all had a glass or two then, except the man at the wheel; and towards evening the man at the wheel could bear it no longer, and seems to have had his glass like all the rest, for the ship's course wobbled a bit and made a circle or two. Then all of a sudden she went off south by east under full canvas till midnight, and never altered her course. And at midnight she came to the wide wet courts of the Temple in the Sea.

People who think that Mr. Smiles is drunk often make a great mistake. And people are not the only ones that have made that mistake. Once a ship made it, and a lot of ships. It's a mistake to think that old Bill Smiles is drunk just because he can't move.

Midnight and moonlight and the Temple in the Sea Bill Smiles clearly remembers, and all the derelicts in the world were there, the old abandoned ships. The figureheads were nodding to themselves and blinking at the image. The image was a woman of white marble on a pedestal in the outer court of the Temple of the Sea: she was clearly the love of all the man-deserted ships, or the goddess to whom they prayed their heathen prayers. And as Bill Smiles was watching them, the lips of the figureheads moved; they all began to pray. But all at once their lips were closed with a snap when they saw that there were men on the Sea-Fancy. They all came crowding up and nodded and nodded and nodded to see if all were drunk, and that's when they made their mistake about old Bill Smiles, although he couldn't move. They would have given up the treasuries of the gulfs sooner than let men hear the prayers they said or guess their love for the goddess. It is the intimate secret of the sea.

The sailor paused. And, in my eagerness to hear what lyrical or blasphemous thing those figureheads prayed by moonlight at midnight in the sea to the woman of marble who was a goddess to ships, I pressed on the sailor more of my Gorgondy wine that the gnomes so wickedly brew.

I should never have done it; but there he was sitting silent while the secret was almost mine. He took it moodily and drank a glass; and with the other glasses that he had had he fell a prey to the villainy of the gnomes who brew this unbridled wine to no good end. His body leaned forward slowly, then fell on to the table, his face being sideways and full of a wicked smile, and, saying very clearly the one word, “Hell,” he became silent for ever with the secret he had from the sea.

How Ali Came to the Black Country

Shooshan the barber went to Shep the maker of teeth to discuss the state of England. They agreed that it was time to send for Ali.

So Shooshan stepped late that night from the little shop near Fleet Street and made his way back again to his house in the ends of London and sent at once the message that brought Ali.

And Ali came, mostly on foot, from the country of Persia, and it took him a year to come; but when he came he was welcome.

And Shep told Ali what was the matter with England and Shooshan swore that it was so, and Ali looking out of the window of the little shop near Fleet Street beheld the ways of London and audibly blessed King Solomon and his seal.

When Shep and Shooshan heard the names of King Solomon and his seal both asked, as they had scarcely dared before, if Ali had it. Ali patted a little bundle of silks that he drew from his inner raiment. It was there.

Now concerning the movements and courses of the stars and the influence on them of spirits of Earth and devils this age has been rightly named by some The Second Age of Ignorance. But Ali knew. And by watching nightly, for seven nights in Bagdad, the way of certain stars he had found out the dwelling place of Him they Needed.

Guided by Ali all three set forth for the Midlands. And by the reverence that was manifest in the faces of Shep and Shooshan towards the person of Ali, some knew what Ali carried, while others said that it was the tablets of the Law, others the name of God, and others that he must have a lot of money about him. So they passed Slod and Apton.

And at last they came to the town for which Ali sought, that spot over which he had seen the shy stars wheel and swerve away from their orbits, being troubled. Verily when they came there were no stars, though it was midnight. And Ali said that it was the appointed place. In harems in Persia in the evening when the tales go round it is still told how Ali and Shep and Shooshan came to the Black country.

When it was dawn they looked upon the country and saw how it was without doubt the appointed place, even as Ali had said, for the earth had been taken out of pits and burned and left lying in heaps, and there were

many factories, and they stood over the town and as it were rejoiced. And with one voice Shep and Shooshan gave praise to Ali.

And Ali said that the great ones of the place must needs be gathered together, and to this end Shep and Shooshan went into the town and there spoke craftily. For they said that Ali had of his wisdom contrived as it were a patent and a novelty which should greatly benefit England. And when they heard how he sought nothing for his novelty save only to benefit mankind they consented to speak with Ali and see his novelty. And they came forth and met Ali.

And Ali spake and said unto them: “O lords of this place; in the book that all men know it is written how that a fisherman casting his net into the sea drew up a bottle of brass, and when he took the stopper from the bottle a dreadful genie of horrible aspect rose from the bottle, as it were like a smoke, even to darkening the sky, whereat the fisherman...” And the great ones of that place said: “We have heard the story.” And Ali said: “What became of that genie after he was safely thrown back into the sea is not properly spoken of by any save those that pursue the study of demons and not with certainty by any man, but that the stopper that bore the ineffable seal and bears it to this day became separate from the bottle is among those things that man may know.” And when there was doubt among the great ones Ali drew forth his bundle and one by one removed those many silks till the seal stood revealed; and some of them knew it for the seal and others knew it not.

And they looked curiously at it and listened to Ali, and Ali said:

“Having heard how evil is the case of England, how a smoke has darkened the country, and in places (as men say) the grass is black, and how even yet your factories multiply, and haste and noise have become such that men have no time for song, I have therefore come at the bidding of my good friend Shooshan, barber of London, and of Shep, a maker of teeth, to make things well with you.”

And they said: “But where is your patent and your novelty?”

And Ali said: “Have I not here the stopper and on it, as good men know, the ineffable seal? Now I have learned in Persia how that your trains that make the haste, and hurry men to and fro, and your factories and the digging of your pits and all the things that are evil are everyone of them caused and brought about by steam.”

“Is it not so?” said Shooshan.

“It is even so,” said Shep.

“Now it is clear,” said Ali, “that the chief devil that vexes England and has done all this harm, who herds men into cities and will not let them rest, is even the devil Steam.”

Then the great ones would have rebuked him but one said: “No, let us hear him, perhaps his patent may improve on steam.”

And to them hearkening Ali went on thus: “O Lords of this place, let there be made a bottle of strong steel, for I have no bottle with my stopper, and this being done let all the factories, trains, digging of pits, and all evil things soever that may be done by steam be stopped for seven days, and the men that tend them shall go free, but the steel bottle for my stopper I will leave open in a likely place. Now that chief devil, Steam, finding no factories to enter into, nor no trains, sirens nor pits prepared for him, and being curious and accustomed to steel pots, will verily enter one night into the bottle that you shall make for my stopper, and I shall spring forth from my hiding with my stopper and fasten him down with the ineffable seal which is the seal of King Solomon and deliver him up to you that you cast him into the sea.”

And the great ones answered Ali and they said: “But what should we gain if we lose our prosperity and be no longer rich?”

And Ali said: “When we have cast this devil into the sea there will come back again the woods and ferns and all the beautiful things that the world hath, the little leaping hares shall be seen at play, there shall be music on the hills again, and at twilight ease and quiet and after the twilight stars.”

And “Verily,” said Shooshan, “there shall be the dance again.”

“Aye,” said Shep, “there shall be the country dance.”

But the great ones spake and said, denying Ali: “We will make no such bottle for your stopper nor stop our healthy factories or good trains, nor cease from our digging of pits nor do anything that you desire, for an interference with steam would strike at the roots of that prosperity that you see so plentifully all around us.”

Thus they dismissed Ali there and then from that place where the earth was torn up and burnt, being taken out of pits, and where factories blazed all night with a demoniac glare; and they dismissed with him both Shooshan, the barber, and Shep, the maker of teeth: so that a week later Ali started from Calais on his long walk back to Persia.

And all this happened thirty years ago, and Shep is an old man now and Shooshan older, and many mouths have bit with the teeth of Shep (for he has a knack of getting them back whenever his customers die), and they have written again to Ali away in the country of Persia with these words, saying:

"O Ali. The devil has indeed begotten a devil, even that spirit Petrol. And the young devil waxeth, and increaseth in lustihood and is ten years old and becoming like to his father. Come therefore and help us with the ineffable seal. For there is none like Ali."

And Ali turns where his slaves scatter rose-leaves, letting the letter fall, and deeply draws from his hookah a puff of the scented smoke, right down into his lungs, and sighs it forth and smiles, and lolling round on to his other elbow speaks comfortably and says, "And shall a man go twice to the help of a dog?"

And with these words he thinks no more of England but ponders again the inscrutable ways of God.

The Bureau d'Echange de Maux

I often think of the Bureau d'Echange de Maux and the wondrously evil old man that sate therein. It stood in a little street that there is in Paris, its doorway made of three brown beams of wood, the top one overlapping the others like the Greek letter *pi*, all the rest painted green, a house far lower and narrower than its neighbours and infinitely stranger, a thing to take one's fancy. And over the doorway on the old brown beam in faded yellow letters this legend ran, Bureau Universel d'Echanges de Maux.

I entered at once and accosted the listless man that lolled on a stool by his counter. I demanded the wherefore of his wonderful house, what evil wares he exchanged, with many other things that I wished to know, for curiosity led me; and indeed had it not I had gone at once from that shop, for there was so evil a look in that fattened man, in the hang of his fallen cheeks and his sinful eye, that you would have said he had had dealings with Hell and won the advantage by sheer wickedness.

Such a man was mine host; but above all the evil of him lay in his eyes, which lay so still, so apathetic, that you would have sworn that he was drugged or dead; like lizards motionless on a wall they lay, then suddenly they darted, and all his cunning flamed up and revealed itself in what one moment before seemed no more than a sleepy and ordinary wicked old man. And this was the object and trade of that peculiar shop, the Bureau Universel d'Echange de Maux: you paid twenty francs, which the old man proceeded to take from me, for admission to the bureau and then had the right to exchange any evil or misfortune with anyone on the premises for some evil or misfortune that he "could afford," as the old man put it.

There were four or five men in the dingy ends of that low-ceilinged room who gesticulated and muttered softly in twos as men who make a bargain, and now and then more came in, and the eyes of the flabby owner of the house leaped up at them as they entered, seemed to know their errands at once and each one's peculiar need, and fell back again into somnolence, receiving his twenty francs in an almost lifeless hand and biting the coin as though in pure absence of mind.

"Some of my clients," he told me. So amazing to me was the trade of this extraordinary shop that I engaged the old man in conversation, repulsive though he was, and from his garrulity I gathered these facts. He spoke in

perfect English though his utterance was somewhat thick and heavy; no language seemed to come amiss to him. He had been in business a great many years, how many he would not say, and was far older than he looked. All kinds of people did business in his shop. What they exchanged with each other he did not care except that it had to be evils, he was not empowered to carry on any other kind of business.

There was no evil, he told me, that was not negotiable there; no evil the old man knew had ever been taken away in despair from his shop. A man might have to wait and come back again next day, and next day and the day after, paying twenty francs each time, but the old man had the addresses of all his clients and shrewdly knew their needs, and soon the right two met and eagerly exchanged their commodities. "Commodities" was the old man's terrible word, said with a gruesome smack of his heavy lips, for he took a pride in his business and evils to him were goods.

I learned from him in ten minutes very much of human nature, more than I have ever learned from any other man; I learned from him that a man's own evil is to him the worst thing there is or ever could be, and that an evil so unbalances all men's minds that they always seek for extremes in that small grim shop. A woman that had no children had exchanged with an impoverished half-maddened creature with twelve. On one occasion a man had exchanged wisdom for folly.

"Why on earth did he do that?" I said.

"None of my business," the old man answered in his heavy indolent way. He merely took his twenty francs from each and ratified the agreement in the little room at the back opening out of the shop where his clients do business. Apparently the man that had parted with wisdom had left the shop upon the tips of his toes with a happy though foolish expression all over his face, but the other went thoughtfully away wearing a troubled and very puzzled look. Almost always it seemed they did business in opposite evils.

But the thing that puzzled me most in all my talks with that unwieldy man, the thing that puzzles me still, is that none that had once done business in that shop ever returned again; a man might come day after day for many weeks, but once do business and he never returned; so much the old man told me, but when I asked him why, he only muttered that he did not know.

It was to discover the wherefore of this strange thing and for no other reason at all that I determined myself to do business sooner or later in the little room at the back of that mysterious shop. I determined to exchange

some very trivial evil for some evil equally slight, to seek for myself an advantage so very small as scarcely to give Fate as it were a grip, for I deeply distrusted these bargains, knowing well that man has never yet benefited by the marvellous and that the more miraculous his advantage appears to be the more securely and tightly do the gods or the witches catch him. In a few days more I was going back to England and I was beginning to fear that I should be sea-sick: this fear of sea-sickness, not the actual malady but only the mere fear of it, I decided to exchange for a suitably little evil. I did not know with whom I should be dealing, who in reality was the head of the firm (one never does when shopping) but I decided that neither Jew nor Devil could make very much on so small a bargain as that.

I told the old man my project, and he scoffed at the smallness of my commodity trying to urge me to some darker bargain, but could not move me from my purpose. And then he told me tales with a somewhat boastful air of the big business, the great bargains that had passed through his hands. A man had once run in there to try and exchange death, he had swallowed poison by accident and had only twelve hours to live. That sinister old man had been able to oblige him. A client was willing to exchange the commodity.

"But what did he give in exchange for death?" I said.

"Life," said that grim old man with a furtive chuckle.

"It must have been a horrible life," I said.

"That was not my affair," the proprietor said, lazily rattling together as he spoke a little pocketful of twenty-franc pieces.

Strange business I watched in that shop for the next few days, the exchange of odd commodities, and heard strange mutterings in corners amongst couples who presently rose and went to the back room, the old man following to ratify.

Twice a day for a week I paid my twenty francs, watching life with its great needs and its little needs morning and afternoon spread out before me in all its wonderful variety.

And one day I met a comfortable man with only a little need, he seemed to have the very evil I wanted. He always feared the lift was going to break. I knew too much of hydraulics to fear things as silly as that, but it was not my business to cure his ridiculous fear. Very few words were needed to convince him that mine was the evil for him, he never crossed the sea, and I on the other hand could always walk upstairs, and I also felt at the time, as

many must feel in that shop, that so absurd a fear could never trouble me. And yet at times it is almost the curse of my life. When we both had signed the parchment in the spidery back room and the old man had signed and ratified (for which we had to pay him fifty francs each) I went back to my hotel, and there I saw the deadly thing in the basement. They asked me if I would go upstairs in the lift, from force of habit I risked it, and I held my breath all the way and clenched my hands. Nothing will induce me to try such a journey again. I would sooner go up to my room in a balloon. And why? Because if a balloon goes wrong you have a chance, it may spread out into a parachute after it has burst, it may catch in a tree, a hundred and one things may happen, but if the lift falls down its shaft you are done. As for sea-sickness I shall never be sick again, I cannot tell you why except that I know that it is so.

And the shop in which I made this remarkable bargain, the shop to which none return when their business is done: I set out for it next day. Blindfold I could have found my way to the unfashionable quarter out of which a mean street runs, where you take the alley at the end, whence runs the cul de sac where the queer shop stood. A shop with pillars, fluted and painted red, stands on its near side, its other neighbour is a low-class jeweller's with little silver brooches in the window. In such incongruous company stood the shop with beams with its walls painted green.

In half an hour I found the cul de sac to which I had gone twice a day for the last week, I found the shop with the ugly painted pillars and the jeweller that sold brooches, but the green house with the three beams was gone.

Pulled down, you will say, although in a single night. That can never be the answer to the mystery, for the house of the fluted pillars painted on plaster and the low-class jeweller's shop with its silver brooches (all of which I could identify one by one) were standing side by side.

A Story of Land and Sea

It is written in the first Book of Wonder how Captain Shard of the bad ship Desperate Lark, having looted the sea-coast city Bombasharna, retired from active life; and resigning piracy to younger men, with the good will of the North and South Atlantic, settled down with a captured queen on his floating island.

Sometimes he sank a ship for the sake of old times but he no longer hovered along the trade-routes; and timid merchants watched for other men.

It was not age that caused him to leave his romantic profession; nor unworthiness of its traditions, nor gun-shot wound, nor drink; but grim necessity and force majeure. Five navies were after him. How he gave them the slip one day in the Mediterranean, how he fought with the Arabs, how a ship's broadside was heard in Lat. 23 N. Long. 4 E. for the first time and the last, with other things unknown to Admiralties, I shall proceed to tell.

He had had his fling, had Shard, captain of pirates, and all his merry men wore pearls in their ear-rings; and now the English fleet was after him under full sail along the coast of Spain with a good North wind behind them. They were not gaining much on Shard's rakish craft, the bad ship Desperate Lark, yet they were closer than was to his liking, and they interfered with business.

For a day and a night they had chased him, when off Cape St. Vincent at about six a.m. Shard took that step that decided his retirement from active life, he turned for the Mediterranean. Had he held on Southwards down the African coast it is doubtful whether in face of the interference of England, Russia, France, Denmark and Spain, he could have made piracy pay; but in turning for the Mediterranean he took what we may call the penultimate step of his life which meant for him settling down. There were three great courses of action invented by Shard in his youth, upon which he pondered by day and brooded by night, consolations in all his dangers, secret even from his men, three means of escape as he hoped from any peril that might meet him on the sea. One of these was the floating island that the Book of Wonder tells of, another was so fantastic that we may doubt if even the brilliant audacity of Shard could ever have found it practicable, at least he never tried it so far as is known in that tavern by the sea in which I glean my news, and the third he determined on carrying out as he turned that

morning for the Mediterranean. True he might yet have practised piracy in spite of the step that he took, a little later when the seas grew quiet, but that penultimate step was like that small house in the country that the business man has his eye on, like some snug investment put away for old age, there are certain final courses in men's lives which after taking they never go back to business.

He turned then for the Mediterranean with the English fleet behind him, and his men wondered.

What madness was this, — muttered Bill the Boatswain in Old Frank's only ear, with the French fleet waiting in the Gulf of Lyons and the Spaniards all the way between Sardinia and Tunis: for they knew the Spaniards' ways. And they made a deputation and waited upon Captain Shard, all of them sober and wearing their costly clothes, and they said that the Mediterranean was a trap, and all he said was that the North wind should hold. And the crew said they were done.

So they entered the Mediterranean and the English fleet came up and closed the straits. And Shard went tacking along the Moroccan coast with a dozen frigates behind him. And the North wind grew in strength. And not till evening did he speak to his crew, and then he gathered them all together except the man at the helm, and politely asked them to come down to the hold. And there he showed them six immense steel axles and a dozen low iron wheels of enormous width which none had seen before; and he told his crew how all unknown to the world his keel had been specially fitted for these same axles and wheels, and how he meant soon to sail to the wide Atlantic again, though not by the way of the straits. And when they heard the name of the Atlantic all his merry men cheered, for they looked on the Atlantic as a wide safe sea.

And night came down and Captain Shard sent for his diver. With the sea getting up it was hard work for the diver, but by midnight things were done to Shard's satisfaction, and the diver said that of all the jobs he had done — but finding no apt comparison, and being in need of a drink, silence fell on him and soon sleep, and his comrades carried him away to his hammock. All the next day the chase went on with the English well in sight, for Shard had lost time overnight with his wheels and axles, and the danger of meeting the Spaniards increased every hour; and evening came when every minute seemed dangerous, yet they still went tacking on towards the East where they knew the Spaniards must be.

And at last they sighted their topsails right ahead, and still Shard went on. It was a close thing, but night was coming on, and the Union Jack which he hoisted helped Shard with the Spaniards for the last few anxious minutes, though it seemed to anger the English, but as Shard said, "There's no pleasing everyone," and then the twilight shivered into darkness.

"Hard to starboard," said Captain Shard.

The North wind which had risen all day was now blowing a gale. I do not know what part of the coast Shard steered for, but Shard knew, for the coasts of the world were to him what Margate is to some of us.

At a place where the desert rolling up from mystery and from death, yea, from the heart of Africa, emerges upon the sea, no less grand than her, no less terrible, even there they sighted the land quite close, almost in darkness. Shard ordered every man to the hinder part of the ship and all the ballast too; and soon the Desperate Lark, her prow a little high out of the water, doing her eighteen knots before the wind, struck a sandy beach and shuddered, she heeled over a little, then righted herself, and slowly headed into the interior of Africa.

The men would have given three cheers, but after the first Shard silenced them and, steering the ship himself, he made them a short speech while the broad wheels pounded slowly over the African sand, doing barely five knots in a gale. The perils of the sea he said had been greatly exaggerated. Ships had been sailing the sea for hundreds of years and at sea you knew what to do, but on land this was different. They were on land now and they were not to forget it. At sea you might make as much noise as you pleased and no harm was done, but on land anything might happen. One of the perils of the land that he instanced was that of hanging. For every hundred men that they hung on land, he said, not more than twenty would be hung at sea. The men were to sleep at their guns. They would not go far that night; for the risk of being wrecked at night was another danger peculiar to the land, while at sea you might sail from set of sun till dawn: yet it was essential to get out of sight of the sea for if anyone knew they were there they'd have cavalry after them. And he had sent back Smerdrak (a young lieutenant of pirates) to cover their tracks where they came up from the sea. And the merry men vigorously nodded their heads though they did not dare to cheer, and presently Smerdrak came running up and they threw him a rope by the stern. And when they had done fifteen knots they anchored, and Captain Shard gathered his men about him and, standing by the land-wheel in the

bows, under the large and clear Algerian stars, he explained his system of steering. There was not much to be said for it, he had with considerable ingenuity detached and pivoted the portion of the keel that held the leading axle and could move it by chains which were controlled from the land-wheel, thus the front pair of wheels could be deflected at will, but only very slightly, and they afterwards found that in a hundred yards they could only turn their ship four yards from her course. But let not captains of comfortable battleships, or owners even of yachts, criticise too harshly a man who was not of their time and who knew not modern contrivances; it should be remembered also that Shard was no longer at sea. His steering may have been clumsy but he did what he could.

When the use and limitations of his land-wheel had been made clear to his men, Shard bade them all turn in except those on watch. Long before dawn he woke them and by the very first gleam of light they got their ship under way, so that when those two fleets that had made so sure of Shard closed in like a great crescent on the Algerian coast there was no sign to see of the Desperate Lark either on sea or land; and the flags of the Admiral's ship broke out into a hearty English oath.

The gale blew for three days and, Shard using more sail by daylight, they scudded over the sands at little less than ten knots, though on the report of rough water ahead (as the lookout man called rocks, low hills or uneven surface before he adapted himself to his new surroundings) the rate was much decreased. Those were long summer days and Shard who was anxious while the wind held good to outpace the rumour of his own appearance sailed for nineteen hours a day, lying to at ten in the evening and hoisting sail again at three a.m. when it first began to be light.

In those three days he did five hundred miles; then the wind dropped to a breeze though it still blew from the North, and for a week they did no more than two knots an hour. The merry men began to murmur then. Luck had distinctly favoured Shard at first for it sent him at ten knots through the only populous districts well ahead of crowds except those who chose to run, and the cavalry were away on a local raid. As for the runners they soon dropped off when Shard pointed his cannon though he did not dare to fire, up there near the coast; for much as he jeered at the intelligence of the English and Spanish Admirals in not suspecting his manoeuvre, the only one as he said that was possible in the circumstances, yet he knew that cannon had an obvious sound which would give his secret away to the weakest mind.

Certainly luck had befriended him, and when it did so no longer he made out of the occasion all that could be made; for instance while the wind held good he had never missed opportunities to revictual, if he passed by a village its pigs and poultry were his, and whenever he passed by water he filled his tanks to the brim, and now that he could only do two knots he sailed all night with a man and a lantern before him: thus in that week he did close on four hundred miles while another man would have anchored at night and have missed five or six hours out of the twenty-four. Yet his men murmured. Did he think the wind would last for ever, they said. And Shard only smoked. It was clear that he was thinking, and thinking hard. "But what is he thinking about?" said Bill to Bad Jack. And Bad Jack answered: "He may think as hard as he likes but thinking won't get us out of the Sahara if this wind were to drop."

And towards the end of that week Shard went to his chart-room and laid a new course for his ship a little to the East and towards cultivation. And one day towards evening they sighted a village, and twilight came and the wind dropped altogether. Then the murmurs of the merry men grew to oaths and nearly to mutiny. "Where were they now?" they asked, and were they being treated like poor honest men?

Shard quieted them by asking what they wished to do themselves and when no one had any better plan than going to the villagers and saying that they had been blown out of their course by a storm, Shard unfolded his scheme to them. Long ago he had heard how they drove carts with oxen in Africa, oxen were very numerous in these parts wherever there was any cultivation, and for this reason when the wind had begun to drop he had laid his course for the village: that night the moment it was dark they were to drive off fifty yoke of oxen; by midnight they must all be yoked to the bows and then away they would go at a good round gallop.

So fine a plan as this astonished the men and they all apologised for their want of faith in Shard, shaking hands with him every one and spitting on their hands before they did so in token of good will.

The raid that night succeeded admirably, but ingenious as Shard was on land, and a past-master at sea, yet it must be admitted that lack of experience in this class of seamanship led him to make a mistake, a slight one it is true, and one that a little practice would have prevented altogether: the oxen could not gallop. Shard swore at them, threatened them with his pistol, said they should have no food, and all to no avail: that night and as

long as they pulled the bad ship Desperate Lark they did one knot an hour and no more. Shard's failures like everything that came his way were used as stones in the edifice of his future success, he went at once to his chart-room and worked out all his calculations anew.

The matter of the oxen's pace made pursuit impossible to avoid. Shard therefore countermanded his order to his lieutenant to cover the tracks in the sand, and the Desperate Lark plodded on into the Sahara on her new course trusting to her guns.

The village was not a large one and the little crowd that was sighted astern next morning disappeared after the first shot from the cannon in the stern. At first Shard made the oxen wear rough iron bits, another of his mistakes, and strong bits too. "For if they run away," he had said, "we might as well be driving before a gale and there's no saying where we'd find ourselves," but after a day or two he found that the bits were no good and, like the practical man he was, immediately corrected his mistake.

And now the crew sang merry songs all day bringing out mandolins and clarionets and cheering Captain Shard. All were jolly except the captain himself whose face was moody and perplexed; he alone expected to hear more of those villagers; and the oxen were drinking up the water every day, he alone feared that there was no more to be had, and a very unpleasant fear that is when your ship is becalmed in a desert. For over a week they went on like this doing ten knots a day and the music and singing got on the captain's nerves, but he dared not tell his men what the trouble was. And then one day the oxen drank up the last of the water. And Lieutenant Smerdrak came and reported the fact.

"Give them rum," said Shard, and he cursed the oxen. "What is good enough for me," he said, "should be good enough for them," and he swore that they should have rum.

"Aye, aye, sir," said the young lieutenant of pirates.

Shard should not be judged by the orders he gave that day, for nearly a fortnight he had watched the doom that was coming slowly towards him, discipline cut him off from anyone that might have shared his fear and discussed it, and all the while he had had to navigate his ship, which even at sea is an arduous responsibility. These things had fretted the calm of that clear judgment that had once baffled five navies. Therefore he cursed the oxen and ordered them rum, and Smerdrak had said "Aye, aye, sir," and gone below.

Towards sunset Shard was standing on the poop, thinking of death; it would not come to him by thirst; mutiny first, he thought. The oxen were refusing rum for the last time, and the men were beginning to eye Captain Shard in a very ominous way, not muttering, but each man looking at him with a sidelong look of the eye as though there were only one thought among them all that had no need of words. A score of geese like a long letter "V" were crossing the evening sky, they slanted their necks and all went twisting downwards somewhere about the horizon. Captain Shard rushed to his chart-room, and presently the men came in at the door with Old Frank in front looking awkward and twisting his cap in his hand.

"What is it?" said Shard as though nothing were wrong.

Then Old Frank said what he had come to say: "We want to know what you be going to do."

And the men nodded grimly.

"Get water for the oxen," said Captain Shard, "as the swine won't have rum, and they'll have to work for it, the lazy beasts. Up anchor!"

And at the word water a look came into their faces like when some wanderer suddenly thinks of home.

"Water!" they said.

"Why not?" said Captain Shard. And none of them ever knew that but for those geese, that slanted their necks and suddenly twisted downwards, they would have found no water that night nor ever after, and the Sahara would have taken them as she has taken so many and shall take so many more. All that night they followed their new course: at dawn they found an oasis and the oxen drank.

And here, on this green acre or so with its palm-trees and its well, beleaguered by thousands of miles of desert and holding out through the ages, here they decided to stay: for those who have been without water for a while in one of Africa's deserts come to have for that simple fluid such a regard as you, O reader, might not easily credit. And here each man chose a site where he would build his hut, and settle down, and marry perhaps, and even forget the sea; when Captain Shard having filled his tanks and barrels peremptorily ordered them to weigh anchor. There was much dissatisfaction, even some grumbling, but when a man has twice saved his fellows from death by the sheer freshness of his mind they come to have a respect for his judgment that is not shaken by trifles. It must be remembered that in the affair of the dropping of the wind and again when they ran out of

water these men were at their wits' end: so was Shard on the last occasion, but that they did not know. All this Shard knew, and he chose this occasion to strengthen the reputation that he had in the minds of the men of that bad ship by explaining to them his motives, which usually he kept secret. The oasis he said must be a port of call for all the travellers within hundreds of miles: how many men did you see gathered together in any part of the world where there was a drop of whiskey to be had! And water here was rarer than whiskey in decent countries and, such was the peculiarity of the Arabs, even more precious. Another thing he pointed out to them, the Arabs were a singularly inquisitive people and if they came upon a ship in the desert they would probably talk about it; and the world having a wickedly malicious tongue would never construe in its proper light their difference with the English and Spanish fleets, but would merely side with the strong against the weak.

And the men sighed, and sang the capstan song and hoisted the anchor and yoked the oxen up, and away they went doing their steady knot, which nothing could increase. It may be thought strange that with all sail furled in dead calm and while the oxen rested they should have cast anchor at all. But custom is not easily overcome and long survives its use. Rather enquire how many such useless customs we ourselves preserve: the flaps for instance to pull up the tops of hunting-boots though the tops no longer pull up, the bows on our evening shoes that neither tie nor untie. They said they felt safer that way and there was an end of it.

Shard lay a course of South by West and they did ten knots that day, the next day they did seven or eight and Shard hove to. Here he intended to stop, they had huge supplies of fodder on board for the oxen, for his men he had a pig or so, plenty of poultry, several sacks of biscuits and ninety-eight oxen (for two were already eaten), and they were only twenty miles from water. Here he said they would stay till folks forgot their past, someone would invent something or some new thing would turn up to take folks' minds off them and the ships he had sunk: he forgot that there are men who are well paid to remember.

Half way between him and the oasis he established a little depot where he buried his water-barrels. As soon as a barrel was empty he sent half a dozen men to roll it by turns to the depot. This they would do at night, keeping hid by day, and next night they would push on to the oasis, fill the barrel and roll it back. Thus only ten miles away he soon had a store of

water, unknown to the thirstiest native of Africa, from which he could safely replenish his tanks at will. He allowed his men to sing and even within reason to light fires. Those were jolly nights while the rum held out; sometimes they saw gazelles watching them curiously, sometimes a lion went by over the sand, the sound of his roar added to their sense of the security of their ship; all round them level, immense lay the Sahara: "This is better than an English prison," said Captain Shard.

And still the dead calm lasted, not even the sand whispered at night to little winds; and when the rum gave out and it looked like trouble, Shard reminded them what little use it had been to them when it was all they had and the oxen wouldn't look at it.

And the days wore on with singing, and even dancing at times, and at nights round a cautious fire in a hollow of sand with only one man on watch they told tales of the sea. It was all a relief after arduous watches and sleeping by the guns, a rest to strained nerves and eyes; and all agreed, for all that they missed their rum, that the best place for a ship like theirs was the land.

This was in Latitude 23 North, Longitude 4 East, where, as I have said, a ship's broadside was heard for the first time and the last. It happened this way.

They had been there several weeks and had eaten perhaps ten or a dozen oxen and all that while there had been no breath of wind and they had seen no one: when one morning about two bells when the crew were at breakfast the lookout man reported cavalry on the port side. Shard who had already surrounded his ship with sharpened stakes ordered all his men on board, the young trumpeter who prided himself on having picked up the ways of the land, sounded "Prepare to receive cavalry". Shard sent a few men below with pikes to the lower port-holes, two more aloft with muskets, the rest to the guns, he changed the "grape" or "canister" with which the guns were loaded in case of surprise, for shot, cleared the decks, drew in ladders, and before the cavalry came within range everything was ready for them. The oxen were always yoked in order that Shard could manoeuvre his ship at a moment's notice.

When first sighted the cavalry were trotting but they were coming on now at a slow canter. Arabs in white robes on good horses. Shard estimated that there were two or three hundred of them. At sixty yards Shard opened with one gun, he had had the distance measured, but had never practised for

fear of being heard at the oasis: the shot went high. The next one fell short and ricochetted over the Arabs' heads. Shard had the range then and by the time the ten remaining guns of his broadside were given the same elevation as that of his second gun the Arabs had come to the spot where the last shot pitched. The broadside hit the horses, mostly low, and ricochetted on amongst them; one cannon-ball striking a rock at the horses' feet shattered it and sent fragments flying amongst the Arabs with the peculiar scream of things set free by projectiles from their motionless harmless state, and the cannon-ball went on with them with a great howl, this shot alone killed three men.

"Very satisfactory," said Shard rubbing his chin. "Load with grape," he added sharply.

The broadside did not stop the Arabs nor even reduce their speed but they crowded in closer together as though for company in their time of danger, which they should not have done. They were four hundred yards off now, three hundred and fifty; and then the muskets began, for the two men in the crow's-nest had thirty loaded muskets besides a few pistols, the muskets all stood round them leaning against the rail; they picked them up and fired them one by one. Every shot told, but still the Arabs came on. They were galloping now. It took some time to load the guns in those days. Three hundred yards, two hundred and fifty, men dropping all the way, two hundred yards; Old Frank for all his one ear had terrible eyes; it was pistols now, they had fired all their muskets; a hundred and fifty; Shard had marked the fifties with little white stones. Old Frank and Bad Jack up aloft felt pretty uneasy when they saw the Arabs had come to that little white stone, they both missed their shots.

"All ready?" said Captain Shard.

"Aye, aye, sir," said Smerdrak.

"Right," said Captain Shard raising a finger.

A hundred and fifty yards is a bad range at which to be caught by grape (or "case" as we call it now), the gunners can hardly miss and the charge has time to spread. Shard estimated afterwards that he got thirty Arabs by that broadside alone and as many horses.

There were close on two hundred of them still on their horses, yet the broadside of grape had unsettled them, they surged round the ship but seemed doubtful what to do. They carried swords and scimitars in their hands, though most had strange long muskets slung behind them, a few

unslung them and began firing wildly. They could not reach Shard's merry men with their swords. Had it not been for that broadside that took them when it did they might have climbed up from their horses and carried the bad ship by sheer force of numbers, but they would have had to have been very steady, and the broadside spoiled all that. Their best course was to have concentrated all their efforts in setting fire to the ship but this they did not attempt. Part of them swarmed all round the ship brandishing their swords and looking vainly for an easy entrance; perhaps they expected a door, they were not sea-faring people; but their leaders were evidently set on driving off the oxen not dreaming that the Desperate Lark had other means of travelling. And this to some extent they succeeded in doing. Thirty they drove off, cutting the traces, twenty they killed on the spot with their scimitars though the bow gun caught them twice as they did their work, and ten more were unluckily killed by Shard's bow gun. Before they could fire a third time from the bows they all galloped away, firing back at the oxen with their muskets and killing three more, and what troubled Shard more than the loss of his oxen was the way that they manoeuvred, galloping off just when the bow gun was ready and riding off by the port bow where the broadside could not get them, which seemed to him to show more knowledge of guns than they could have learned on that bright morning. What, thought Shard to himself, if they should bring big guns against the Desperate Lark! And the mere thought of it made him rail at Fate. But the merry men all cheered when they rode away. Shard had only twenty-two oxen left, and then a score or so of the Arabs dismounted while the rest rode further on leading their horses. And the dismounted men lay down on the port bow behind some rocks two hundred yards away and began to shoot at the oxen. Shard had just enough of them left to manoeuvre his ship with an effort and he turned his ship a few points to the starboard so as to get a broadside at the rocks. But grape was of no use here as the only way he could get an Arab was by hitting one of the rocks with shot behind which an Arab was lying, and the rocks were not easy to hit except by chance, and as often as he manoeuvred his ship the Arabs changed their ground. This went on all day while the mounted Arabs hovered out of range watching what Shard would do; and all the while the oxen were growing fewer, so good a mark were they, until only ten were left, and the ship could manoeuvre no longer. But then they all rode off.

The merry men were delighted, they calculated that one way and another they had unhorsed a hundred Arabs and on board there had been no more than one man wounded: Bad Jack had been hit in the wrist; probably by a bullet meant for the men at the guns, for the Arabs were firing high. They had captured a horse and had found quaint weapons on the bodies of the dead Arabs and an interesting kind of tobacco. It was evening now and they talked over the fight, made jokes about their luckier shots, smoked their new tobacco and sang; altogether it was the jolliest evening they'd had. But Shard alone on the quarter-deck paced to and fro pondering, brooding and wondering. He had chopped off Bad Jack's wounded hand and given him a hook out of store, for captain does doctor upon these occasions and Shard, who was ready for most things, kept half a dozen or so of neat new limbs, and of course a chopper. Bad Jack had gone below swearing a little and said he'd lie down for a bit, the men were smoking and singing on the sand, and Shard was there alone. The thought that troubled Shard was: what would the Arabs do? They did not look like men to go away for nothing. And at back of all his thoughts was one that reiterated guns, guns, guns. He argued with himself that they could not drag them all that way on the sand, that the Desperate Lark was not worth it, that they had given it up. Yet he knew in his heart that that was what they would do. He knew there were fortified towns in Africa, and as for its being worth it, he knew that there was no pleasant thing left now to those defeated men except revenge, and if the Desperate Lark had come over the sand why not guns? He knew that the ship could never hold out against guns and cavalry, a week perhaps, two weeks, even three: what difference did it make how long it was, and the men sang:

Away we go, Oho, Oho, Oho,
A drop of rum for you and me
And the world's as round as the letter O
And round it runs the sea.

A melancholy settled down on Shard.

About sunset Lieutenant Smerdrak came up for orders. Shard ordered a trench to be dug along the port side of the ship. The men wanted to sing and grumbled at having to dig, especially as Shard never mentioned his fear of guns, but he fingered his pistols and in the end Shard had his way. No one on board could shoot like Captain Shard. That is often the way with

captains of pirate ships, it is a difficult position to hold. Discipline is essential to those that have the right to fly the skull-and-cross-bones, and Shard was the man to enforce it. It was starlight by the time the trench was dug to the captain's satisfaction and the men that it was to protect when the worst came to the worst swore all the time as they dug. And when it was finished they clamoured to make a feast on some of the killed oxen, and this Shard let them do. And they lit a huge fire for the first time, burning abundant scrub, they thinking that Arabs daren't return, Shard knowing that concealment was now useless. All that night they feasted and sang, and Shard sat up in his chart-room making his plans.

When morning came they rigged up the cutter as they called the captured horse and told off her crew. As there were only two men that could ride at all these became the crew of the cutter. Spanish Dick and Bill the Boatswain were the two.

Shard's orders were that turn and turn about they should take command of the cutter and cruise about five miles off to the North East all the day but at night they were to come in. And they fitted the horse up with a flagstaff in front of the saddle so that they could signal from her, and carried an anchor behind for fear she should run away.

And as soon as Spanish Dick had ridden off Shard sent some men to roll all the barrels back from the depot where they were buried in the sand, with orders to watch the cutter all the time and, if she signalled, to return as fast as they could.

They buried the Arabs that day, removing their water-bottles and any provisions they had, and that night they got all the water-barrels in, and for days nothing happened. One event of extraordinary importance did indeed occur, the wind got up one day, but it was due South, and as the oasis lay to the North of them and beyond that they might pick up the camel track Shard decided to stay where he was. If it had looked to him like lasting Shard might have hoisted sail but it it dropped at evening as he knew it would, and in any case it was not the wind he wanted. And more days went by, two weeks without a breeze. The dead oxen would not keep and they had had to kill three more, there were only seven left now.

Never before had the men been so long without rum. And Captain Shard had doubled the watch besides making two more men sleep at the guns. They had tired of their simple games, and most of their songs, and their

tales that were never true were no longer new. And then one day the monotony of the desert came down upon them.

There is a fascination in the Sahara, a day there is delightful, a week is pleasant, a fortnight is a matter of opinion, but it was running into months. The men were perfectly polite but the boatswain wanted to know when Shard thought of moving on. It was an unreasonable question to ask of the captain of any ship in a dead calm in a desert, but Shard said he would set a course and let him know in a day or two. And a day or two went by over the monotony of the Sahara, who for monotony is unequalled by all the parts of the earth. Great marshes cannot equal it, nor plains of grass nor the sea, the Sahara alone lies unaltered by the seasons, she has no altering surface, no flowers to fade or grow, year in year out she is changeless for hundreds and hundreds of miles. And the boatswain came again and took off his cap and asked Captain Shard to be so kind as to tell them about his new course. Shard said he meant to stay until they had eaten three more of the oxen as they could only take three of them in the hold, there were only six left now. But what if there was no wind, the boatswain said. And at that moment the faintest breeze from the North ruffled the boatswain's forelock as he stood with his cap in his hand.

"Don't talk about the wind to *me*," said Captain Shard: and Bill was a little frightened for Shard's mother had been a gipsy.

But it was only a breeze astray, a trick of the Sahara. And another week went by and they ate two more oxen.

They obeyed Captain Shard ostentatiously now but they wore ominous looks. Bill came again and Shard answered him in Romany.

Things were like this one hot Sahara morning when the cutter signalled. The lookout man told Shard and Shard read the message, "Cavalry astern" it read, and then a little later she signalled, "With guns."

"Ah," said Captain Shard.

One ray of hope Shard had; the flags on the cutter fluttered. For the first time for five weeks a light breeze blew from the North, very light, you hardly felt it. Spanish Dick rode in and anchored his horse to starboard and the cavalry came on slowly from the port.

Not till the afternoon did they come in sight, and all the while that little breeze was blowing.

"One knot," said Shard at noon. "Two knots," he said at six bells and still it grew and the Arabs trotted nearer. By five o'clock the merry men of the

bad ship Desperate Lark could make out twelve long old-fashioned guns on low wheeled carts dragged by horses and what looked like lighter guns carried on camels. The wind was blowing a little stronger now. “Shall we hoist sail, sir?” said Bill.

“Not yet,” said Shard.

By six o’clock the Arabs were just outside the range of cannon and there they halted. Then followed an anxious hour or so, but the Arabs came no nearer. They evidently meant to wait till dark to bring their guns up. Probably they intended to dig a gun epaulment from which they could safely pound away at the ship.

“We could do three knots,” said Shard half to himself as he was walking up and down his quarter-deck with very fast short paces. And then the sun set and they heard the Arabs praying and Shard’s merry men cursed at the top of their voices to show that they were as good men as they.

The Arabs had come no nearer, waiting for night. They did not know how Shard was longing for it too, he was gritting his teeth and sighing for it, he even would have prayed, but that he feared that it might remind Heaven of him and his merry men.

Night came and the stars. “Hoist sail,” said Shard. The men sprang to their places, they had had enough of that silent lonely spot. They took the oxen on board and let the great sails down, and like a lover coming from over sea, long dreamed of, long expected, like a lost friend seen again after many years, the North wind came into the pirates’ sails. And before Shard could stop it a ringing English cheer went away to the wondering Arabs.

They started off at three knots and soon they might have done four but Shard would not risk it at night. All night the wind held good, and doing three knots from ten to four they were far out of sight of the Arabs when daylight came. And then Shard hoisted more sail and they did four knots and by eight bells they were doing four and a half. The spirits of those volatile men rose high, and discipline became perfect. So long as there was wind in the sails and water in the tanks Captain Shard felt safe at least from mutiny. Great men can only be overthrown while their fortunes are at their lowest. Having failed to depose Shard when his plans were open to criticism and he himself scarce knew what to do next it was hardly likely they could do it now; and whatever we think of his past and his way of living we cannot deny that Shard was among the great men of the world.

Of defeat by the Arabs he did not feel so sure. It was useless to try to cover his tracks even if he had had time, the Arab cavalry could have picked them up anywhere. And he was afraid of their camels with those light guns on board, he had heard they could do seven knots and keep it up most of the day and if as much as one shot struck the mainmast... and Shard taking his mind off useless fears worked out on his chart when the Arabs were likely to overtake them. He told his men that the wind would hold good for a week, and, gipsy or no, he certainly knew as much about the wind as is good for a sailor to know.

Alone in his chart-room he worked it out like this, mark two hours to the good for surprise and finding the tracks and delay in starting, say three hours if the guns were mounted in their epaulments, then the Arabs should start at seven. Supposing the camels go twelve hours a day at seven knots they would do eighty-four knots a day, while Shard doing three knots from ten to four, and four knots the rest of the time, was doing ninety and actually gaining. But when it came to it he wouldn't risk more than two knots at night while the enemy were out of sight, for he rightly regarded anything more than that as dangerous when sailing on land at night, so he too did eighty-four knots a day. It was a pretty race. I have not troubled to see if Shard added up his figures wrongly or if he under-rated the pace of camels, but whatever it was the Arabs gained slightly, for on the fourth day Spanish Jack, five knots astern on what they called the cutter, sighted the camels a very long way off and signalled the fact to Shard. They had left their cavalry behind as Shard supposed they would. The wind held good, they had still two oxen left and could always eat their "cutter", and they had a fair, though not ample, supply of water, but the appearance of the Arabs was a blow to Shard for it showed him that there was no getting away from them, and of all things he dreaded guns. He made light of it to the men: said they would sink the lot before they had been in action half an hour: yet he feared that once the guns came up it was only a question of time before his rigging was cut or his steering gear disabled.

One point the Desperate Lark scored over the Arabs and a very good one too, darkness fell just before they could have sighted her and now Shard used the lantern ahead as he dared not do on the first night when the Arabs were close, and with the help of it managed to do three knots. The Arabs encamped in the evening and the Desperate Lark gained twenty knots. But

the next evening they appeared again and this time they saw the sails of the Desperate Lark.

On the sixth day they were close. On the seventh they were closer. And then, a line of verdure across their bows, Shard saw the Niger River.

Whether he knew that for a thousand miles it rolled its course through forest, whether he even knew that it was there at all; what his plans were, or whether he lived from day to day like a man whose days are numbered he never told his men. Nor can I get an indication on this point from the talk that I hear from sailors in their cups in a certain tavern I know of. His face was expressionless, his mouth shut, and he held his ship to her course. That evening they were up to the edge of the tree trunks and the Arabs camped and waited ten knots astern and the wind had sunk a little.

There Shard anchored a little before sunset and landed at once. At first he explored the forest a little on foot. Then he sent for Spanish Dick. They had slung the cutter on board some days ago when they found she could not keep up. Shard could not ride but he sent for Spanish Dick and told him he must take him as a passenger. So Spanish Dick slung him in front of the saddle "before the mast" as Shard called it, for they still carried a mast on the front of the saddle, and away they galloped together. "Rough weather," said Shard, but he surveyed the forest as he went and the long and short of it was he found a place where the forest was less than half a mile thick and the Desperate Lark might get through: but twenty trees must be cut. Shard marked the trees himself, sent Spanish Dick right back to watch the Arabs and turned the whole of his crew on to those twenty trees. It was a frightful risk, the Desperate Lark was empty, with an enemy no more than ten knots astern, but it was a moment for bold measures and Shard took the chance of being left without his ship in the heart of Africa in the hope of being repaid by escaping altogether.

The men worked all night on those twenty trees, those that had no axes bored with bradawls and blasted, and then relieved those that had.

Shard was indefatigable, he went from tree to tree showing exactly what way every one was to fall, and what was to be done with them when they were down. Some had to be cut down because their branches would get in the way of the masts, others because their trunks would be in the way of the wheels; in the case of the last the stumps had to be made smooth and low with saws and perhaps a bit of the trunk sawn off and rolled away. This was the hardest work they had. And they were all large trees, on the other hand

had they been small there would have been many more of them and they could not have sailed in and out, sometimes for hundreds of yards, without cutting any at all: and all this Shard calculated on doing if only there was time.

The light before dawn came and it looked as if they would never do it at all. And then dawn came and it was all done but one tree, the hard part of the work had all been done in the night and a sort of final rush cleared everything up except that one huge tree. And then the cutter signalled the Arabs were moving. At dawn they had prayed, and now they had struck their camp. Shard at once ordered all his men to the ship except ten whom he left at the tree, they had some way to go and the Arabs had been moving some ten minutes before they got there. Shard took in the cutter which wasted five minutes, hoisted sail short-handed and that took five minutes more, and slowly got under way.

The wind was dropping still and by the time the Desperate Lark had come to the edge of that part of the forest through which Shard had laid his course the Arabs were no more than five knots away. He had sailed East half a mile, which he ought to have done overnight so as to be ready, but he could not spare time or thought or men away from those twenty trees. Then Shard turned into the forest and the Arabs were dead astern. They hurried when they saw the Desperate Lark enter the forest.

"Doing ten knots," said Shard as he watched them from the deck. The Desperate Lark was doing no more than a knot and a half for the wind was weak under the lee of the trees. Yet all went well for a while. The big tree had just come down some way ahead, and the ten men were sawing bits off the trunk.

And then Shard saw a branch that he had not marked on the chart, it would just catch the top of the mainmast. He anchored at once and sent a hand aloft who sawed it half way through and did the rest with a pistol, and now the Arabs were only three knots astern. For a quarter of a mile Shard steered them through the forest till they came to the ten men and that bad big tree, another foot had yet to come off one corner of the stump for the wheels had to pass over it. Shard turned all hands on to the stump and it was then that the Arabs came within shot. But they had to unpack their gun. And before they had it mounted Shard was away. If they had charged things might have been different. When they saw the Desperate Lark under way again the Arabs came on to within three hundred yards and there they

mounted two guns. Shard watched them along his stern gun but would not fire. They were six hundred yards away before the Arabs could fire and then they fired too soon and both guns missed. And Shard and his merry men saw clear water only ten fathoms ahead. Then Shard loaded his stern gun with canister instead of shot and at the same moment the Arabs charged on their camels; they came galloping down through the forest waving long lances. Shard left the steering to Smerdrak and stood by the stern gun, the Arabs were within fifty yards and still Shard did not fire; he had most of his men in the stern with muskets beside him. Those lances carried on camels were altogether different from swords in the hands of horsemen, they could reach the men on deck. The men could see the horrible barbs on the lanceheads, they were almost at their faces when Shard fired, and at the same moment the Desperate Lark with her dry and suncracked keel in air on the high bank of the Niger fell forward like a diver. The gun went off through the tree-tops, a wave came over the bows and swept the stern, the Desperate Lark wriggled and righted herself, she was back in her element.

The merry men looked at the wet decks and at their dripping clothes. “Water,” they said almost wonderingly.

The Arabs followed a little way through the forest but when they saw that they had to face a broadside instead of one stern gun and perceived that a ship afloat is less vulnerable to cavalry even than when on shore, they abandoned ideas of revenge, and comforted themselves with a text out of their sacred book which tells how in other days and other places our enemies shall suffer even as we desire.

For a thousand miles with the flow of the Niger and the help of occasional winds, the Desperate Lark moved seawards. At first he sweeps East a little and then Southwards, till you come to Akassa and the open sea.

I will not tell you how they caught fish and ducks, raided a village here and there and at last came to Akassa, for I have said much already of Captain Shard. Imagine them drawing nearer and nearer the sea, bad men all, and yet with a feeling for something where we feel for our king, our country or our home, a feeling for something that burned in them not less ardently than our feelings in us, and that something the sea. Imagine them nearing it till sea birds appeared and they fancied they felt sea breezes and all sang songs again that they had not sung for weeks. Imagine them heaving at last on the salt Atlantic again.

I have said much already of Captain Shard and I fear lest I shall weary you, O my reader, if I tell you any more of so bad a man. I too at the top of a tower all alone am weary.

And yet it is right that such a tale should be told. A journey almost due South from near Algiers to Akassa in a ship that we should call no more than a yacht. Let it be a stimulus to younger men.

Guarantee To The Reader

Since writing down for your benefit, O my reader, all this long tale that I heard in the tavern by the sea I have travelled in Algeria and Tunisia as well as in the Desert. Much that I saw in those countries seems to throw doubt on the tale that the sailor told me. To begin with the Desert does not come within hundreds of miles of the coast and there are more mountains to cross than you would suppose, the Atlas mountains in particular. It is just possible Shard might have got through by El Cantara, following the camel road which is many centuries old; or he may have gone by Algiers and Bou Saada and through the mountain pass El Finita Dem, though that is a bad enough way for camels to go (let alone bullocks with a ship) for which reason the Arabs call it Finita Dem — the Path of Blood.

I should not have ventured to give this story the publicity of print had the sailor been sober when he told it, for fear that he I should have deceived you, O my reader; but this was never the case with him as I took good care to ensure: “in vino veritas” is a sound old proverb, and I never had cause to doubt his word unless that proverb lies.

If it should prove that he has deceived me, let it pass; but if he has been the means of deceiving you there are little things about him that I know, the common gossip of that ancient tavern whose leaded bottle-glass windows watch the sea, which I will tell at once to every judge of my acquaintance, and it will be a pretty race to see which of them will hang him.

Meanwhile, O my reader, believe the story, resting assured that if you are taken in the thing shall be a matter for the hangman.

A Tale of the Equator

He who is Sultan so remote to the East that his dominions were deemed fabulous in Babylon, whose name is a by-word for distance today in the streets of Bagdad, whose capital bearded travellers invoke by name in the gate at evening to gather hearers to their tales when the smoke of tobacco arises, dice rattle and taverns shine; even he in that very city made mandate, and said: “Let there be brought hither all my learned men that they may come before me and rejoice my heart with learning.”

Men ran and clarions sounded, and it was so that there came before the Sultan all of his learned men. And many were found wanting. But of those that were able to say acceptable things, ever after to be named The Fortunate, one said that to the South of the Earth lay a Land — said Land was crowned with lotus — where it was summer in our winter days and where it was winter in summer.

And when the Sultan of those most distant lands knew that the Creator of All had contrived a device so vastly to his delight his merriment knew no bounds. On a sudden he spake and said, and this was the gist of his saying, that upon that line of boundary or limit that divided the North from the South a palace be made, where in the Northern courts should summer be, while in the South was winter; so should he move from court to court according to his mood, and dally with the summer in the morning and spend the noon with snow. So the Sultan’s poets were sent for and bade to tell of that city, foreseeing its splendour far away to the South and in the future of time; and some were found fortunate. And of those that were found fortunate and were crowned with flowers none earned more easily the Sultan’s smile (on which long days depended) than he that foreseeing the city spake of it thus:

“In seven years and seven days, O Prop of Heaven, shall thy builders build it, thy palace that is neither North nor South, where neither summer nor winter is sole lord of the hours. White I see it, very vast, as a city, very fair, as a woman, Earth’s wonder, with many windows, with thy princesses peering out at twilight; yea, I behold the bliss of the gold balconies, and hear a rustling down long galleries and the doves’ coo upon its sculptured eaves. O Prop of Heaven, would that so fair a city were built by thine ancient sires, the children of the sun, that so might all men see it even today,

and not the poets only, whose vision sees it so far away to the South and in the future of time.

"O King of the Years, it shall stand midmost on that line that divideth equally the North from the South and that parteth the seasons asunder as with a screen. On the Northern side when summer is in the North thy silken guards shall pace by dazzling walls while thy spearsmen clad in furs go round the South. But at the hour of noon in the midmost day of the year thy chamberlain shall go down from his high place and into the midmost court, and men with trumpets shall go down behind him, and he shall utter a great cry at noon, and the men with trumpets shall cause their trumpets to blare, and the spearsmen clad in furs shall march to the North and thy silken guard shall take their place in the South, and summer shall leave the North and go to the South, and all the swallows shall rise and follow after. And alone in thine inner courts shall no change be, for they shall lie narrowly along that line that parteth the seasons in sunder and divideth the North from the South, and thy long gardens shall lie under them.

"And in thy gardens shall spring always be, for spring lies ever at the marge of summer; and autumn also shall always tint thy gardens, for autumn always flares at winter's edge, and those gardens shall lie apart between winter and summer. And there shall be orchards in thy garden, too, with all the burden of autumn on their boughs and all the blossom of spring.

"Yea, I behold this palace, for we see future things; I see its white wall shine in the huge glare of midsummer, and the lizards lying along it motionless in the sun, and men asleep in the noonday, and the butterflies floating by, and birds of radiant plumage chasing marvellous moths; far off the forest and great orchids glorying there, and iridescent insects dancing round in the light. I see the wall upon the other side; the snow has come upon the battlements, the icicles have fringed them like frozen beards, a wild wind blowing out of lonely places and crying to the cold fields as it blows has sent the snowdrifts higher than the buttresses; they that look out through windows on that side of thy palace see the wild geese flying low and all the birds of the winter, going by swift in packs beat low by the bitter wind, and the clouds above them are black, for it is midwinter there; while in thine other courts the fountains tinkle, falling on marble warmed by the fire of the summer sun.

"Such, O King of the Years, shall thy palace be, and its name shall be Erlathdronion, Earth's Wonder; and thy wisdom shall bid thine architects

build at once, that all may see what as yet the poets see only, and that prophecy be fulfilled."

And when the poet ceased the Sultan spake, and said, as all men hearkened with bent heads:

"It will be unnecessary for my builders to build this palace, Erlathdronion, Earth's Wonder, for in hearing thee we have drunk already its pleasures."

And the poet went forth from the Presence and dreamed a new thing.

* * * * *

A Narrow Escape

It was underground.

In that dank cavern down below Belgrave Square the walls were dripping. But what was that to the magician? It was secrecy that he needed, not dryness. There he pondered upon the trend of events, shaped destinies and concocted magical brews.

For the last few years the serenity of his ponderings had been disturbed by the noise of the motor-bus; while to his keen ears there came the earthquake-rumble, far off, of the train in the tube, going down Sloane Street; and when he heard of the world above his head was not to its credit.

He decided one evening over his evil pipe, down there in his dank chamber, that London had lived long enough, had abused its opportunities, had gone too far, in fine, with its civilisation. And so he decided to wreck it.

Therefore he beckoned up his acolyte from the weedy end of the cavern, and, "Bring me," he said, "the heart of the toad that dwelleth in Arabia and by the mountains of Bethany." The acolyte slipped away by the hidden door, leaving that grim old man with his frightful pipe, and whither he went who knows but the gipsy people, or by what path he returned; but within a year he stood in the cavern again, slipping secretly in by the trap while the old man smoked, and he brought with him a little fleshy thing that rotted in a casket of pure gold.

"What is it?" the old man croaked.

"It is," said the acolyte, "the heart of the toad that dwelt once in Arabia and by the mountains of Bethany."

The old man's crooked fingers closed on it, and he blessed the acolyte with his rasping voice and claw-like hand uplifted; the motor-bus rumbled above on its endless journey; far off the train shook Sloane Street.

"Come," said the old magician, "it is time." And there and then they left the weedy cavern, the acolyte carrying cauldron, gold poker and all things needful, and went abroad in the light. And very wonderful the old man looked in his silks.

Their goal was the outskirts of London; the old man strode in front and the acolyte ran behind him, and there was something magical in the old man's stride alone, without his wonderful dress, the cauldron and wand, the hurrying acolyte and the small gold poker.

Little boys jeered till they caught the old man's eye. So there went on through London this strange procession of two, too swift for any to follow. Things seemed worse up there than they did in the cavern, and the further they got on their way towards London's outskirts the worse London got. "It is time," said the old man, "surely."

And so they came at last to London's edge and a small hill watching it with a mournful look. It was so mean that the acolyte longed for the cavern, dank though it was and full of terrible sayings that the old man said when he slept.

They climbed the hill and put the cauldron down, and put there in the necessary things, and lit a fire of herbs that no chemist will sell nor decent gardener grow, and stirred the cauldron with the golden poker. The magician retired a little apart and muttered, then he strode back to the cauldron and, all being ready, suddenly opened the casket and let the fleshy thing fall in to boil.

Then he made spells, then he flung up his arms; the fumes from the cauldron entering in at his mind he said raging things that he had not known before and runes that were dreadful (the acolyte screamed); there he cursed London from fog to loam-pit, from zenith to the abyss, motor-bus, factory, shop, parliament, people. "Let them all perish," he said, "and London pass away, tram lines and bricks and pavement, the usurpers too long of the fields, let them all pass away and the wild hares come back, blackberry and briar-rose."

"Let it pass," he said, "pass now, pass utterly."

In the momentary silence the old man coughed, then waited with eager eyes; and the long long hum of London hummed as it always has since first the reed-huts were set up by the river, changing its note at times but always humming, louder now than it was in years gone by, but humming night and day though its voice be cracked with age; so it hummed on.

And the old man turned him round to his trembling acolyte and terribly said as he sank into the earth: "YOU HAVE NOT BROUGHT ME THE HEART OF THE TOAD THAT DWELLETH IN ARABIA NOR BY THE MOUNTAINS OF BETHANY!"

The Watch-tower

I sat one April in Provence on a small hill above an ancient town that Goth and Vandal as yet have forborne to "bring up to date."

On the hill was an old worn castle with a watch-tower, and a well with narrow steps and water in it still.

The watch-tower, staring South with neglected windows, faced a broad valley full of the pleasant twilight and the hum of evening things: it saw the fires of wanderers blink from the hills, beyond them the long forest black with pines, one star appearing, and darkness settling slowly down on Var.

Sitting there listening to the green frogs croaking, hearing far voices clearly but all transmuted by evening, watching the windows in the little town glimmering one by one, and seeing the gloaming dwindle solemnly into night, a great many things fell from mind that seem important by day, and evening in their place planted strange fancies.

Little winds had arisen and were whispering to and fro, it grew cold, and I was about to descend the hill, when I heard a voice behind me saying, "Beware, beware."

So much the voice appeared a part of the evening that I did not turn round at first; it was like voices that one hears in sleep and thinks to be of one's dream. And the word was monotonously repeated, in French.

When I turned round I saw an old man with a horn. He had a white beard marvellously long, and still went on saying slowly, "Beware, beware." He had clearly just come from the tower by which he stood, though I had heard no footfall. Had a man come stealthily upon me at such an hour and in so lonesome a place I had certainly felt surprised; but I saw almost at once that he was a spirit, and he seemed with his uncouth horn and his long white beard and that noiseless step of his to be so native to that time and place that I spoke to him as one does to some fellow-traveller who asks you if you mind having the window up.

I asked him what there was to beware of.

"Of what should a town beware," he said, "but the Saracens?"

"Saracens?" I said.

"Yes, Saracens, Saracens," he answered and brandished his horn.

"And who are you?" I said.

"I, I am the spirit of the tower," he said.

When I asked him how he came by so human an aspect and was so unlike the material tower beside him he told me that the lives of all the watchers who had ever held the horn in the tower there had gone to make the spirit of the tower. “It takes a hundred lives,” he said. “None hold the horn of late and men neglect the tower. When the walls are in ill repair the Saracens come: it was ever so.”

“The Saracens don’t come nowadays,” I said.

But he was gazing past me watching, and did not seem to heed me.

“They will run down those hills,” he said, pointing away to the South, “out of the woods about nightfall, and I shall blow my horn. The people will all come up from the town to the tower again; but the loopholes are in very ill repair.”

“We never hear of the Saracens now,” I said.

“Hear of the Saracens!” the old spirit said. “Hear of the Saracens! They slip one evening out of that forest, in the long white robes that they wear, and I blow my horn. That is the first that anyone ever hears of the Saracens.”

“I mean,” I said, “that they never come at all. They cannot come and men fear other things.” For I thought the old spirit might rest if he knew that the Saracens can never come again. But he said, “There is nothing in the world to fear but the Saracens. Nothing else matters. How can men fear other things?”

Then I explained, so that he might have rest, and told him how all Europe, and in particular France, had terrible engines of war, both on land and sea; and how the Saracens had not these terrible engines either on sea or land, and so could by no means cross the Mediterranean or escape destruction on shore even though they should come there. I alluded to the European railways that could move armies night and day faster than horses could gallop. And when as well as I could I had explained all, he answered, “In time all these things pass away and then there will still be the Saracens.”

And then I said, “There has not been a Saracen either in France or Spain for over four hundred years.”

And he said, “The Saracens! You do not know their cunning. That was ever the way of the Saracens. They do not come for a while, no not they, for a long while, and then one day they come.”

And peering southwards, but not seeing clearly because of the rising mist, he silently moved to his tower and up its broken steps.

How Plash-Goo Came to the Land of None's Desire

In a thatched cottage of enormous size, so vast that we might consider it a palace, but only a cottage in the style of its building, its timbers and the nature of its interior, there lived Plash-Goo.

Plash-Goo was of the children of the giants, whose sire was Uph. And the lineage of Uph had dwindled in bulk for the last five hundred years, till the giants were now no more than fifteen foot high; but Uph ate elephants which he caught with his hands.

Now on the tops of the mountains above the house of Plash-Goo, for Plash-Goo lived in the plains, there dwelt the dwarf whose name was Lrippity-Kang. And the dwarf used to walk at evening on the edge of the tops of the mountains, and would walk up and down along it, and was squat and ugly and hairy, and was plainly seen of Plash-Goo.

And for many weeks the giant had suffered the sight of him, but at length grew irked at the sight (as men are by little things), and could not sleep of a night and lost his taste for pigs. And at last there came the day, as anyone might have known, when Plash-Goo shouldered his club and went up to look for the dwarf.

And the dwarf though briefly squat was broader than may be dreamed, beyond all breadth of man, and stronger than men may know; strength in its very essence dwelt in that little frame, as a spark in the heart of a flint: but to Plash-Goo he was no more than mis-shapen, bearded and squat, a thing that dared to defy all natural laws by being more broad than long.

When Plash-Goo came to the mountain he cast his chimahalk down (for so he named the club of his heart's desire) lest the dwarf should defy him with nimbleness; and stepped towards Lrippity-Kang with gripping hands, who stopped in his mountainous walk without a word, and swung round his hideous breadth to confront Plash-Goo. Already then Plash-Goo in the deeps of his mind had seen himself seize the dwarf in one large hand and hurl him with his beard and his hated breadth sheer down the precipice that dropped away from that very place to the land of None's Desire. Yet it was otherwise that Fate would have it. For the dwarf parried with his little arms the grip of those monstrous hands, and gradually working along the enormous limbs came at length to the giant's body where by dwarfish cunning he obtained a grip; and turning Plash-Goo about, as a spider does

some great fly, till his little grip was suitable to his purpose, he suddenly lifted the giant over his head. Slowly at first, by the edge of that precipice whose base sheer distance hid, he swung his giant victim round his head, but soon faster and faster; and at last when Plash-Goo was streaming round the hated breadth of the dwarf and the no less hated beard was flapping in the wind, Lrippity-Kang let go. Plash-Goo shot over the edge and for some way further, out towards Space, like a stone; then he began to fall. It was long before he believed and truly knew that this was really he that fell from this mountain, for we do not associate such dooms with ourselves; but when he had fallen for some while through the evening and saw below him, where there had been nothing to see, or began to see, the glimmer of tiny fields, then his optimism departed; till later on when the fields were greener and larger he saw that this was indeed (and growing now terribly nearer) that very land to which he had destined the dwarf.

At last he saw it unmistakable, close, with its grim houses and its dreadful ways, and its green fields shining in the light of the evening. His cloak was streaming from him in whistling shreds.

So Plash-Goo came to the Land of None’s Desire.

The Three Sailors' Gambit

Sitting some years ago in the ancient tavern at Over, one afternoon in Spring, I was waiting, as was my custom, for something strange to happen. In this I was not always disappointed for the very curious leaded panes of that tavern, facing the sea, let a light into the low-ceilinged room so mysterious, particularly at evening, that it somehow seemed to affect the events within. Be that as it may, I have seen strange things in that tavern and heard stranger things told.

And as I sat there three sailors entered the tavern, just back, as they said, from sea, and come with sunburned skins from a very long voyage to the South; and one of them had a board and chessmen under his arm, and they were complaining that they could find no one who knew how to play chess. This was the year that the Tournament was in England. And a little dark man at a table in a corner of the room, drinking sugar and water, asked them why they wished to play chess; and they said they would play any man for a pound. They opened their box of chessmen then, a cheap and nasty set, and the man refused to play with such uncouth pieces, and the sailors suggested that perhaps he could find better ones; and in the end he went round to his lodgings near by and brought his own, and then they sat down to play for a pound a side. It was a consultation game on the part of the sailors, they said that all three must play.

Well, the little dark man turned out to be Stavlokratz.

Of course he was fabulously poor, and the sovereign meant more to him than it did to the sailors, but he didn't seem keen to play, it was the sailors that insisted; he had made the badness of the sailors' chessmen an excuse for not playing at all, but the sailors had overruled that, and then he told them straight out who he was, and the sailors had never heard of Stavlokratz.

Well, no more was said after that. Stavlokratz said no more, either because he did not wish to boast or because he was huffed that they did not know who he was. And I saw no reason to enlighten the sailors about him; if he took their pound they had brought it upon themselves, and my boundless admiration for his genius made me feel that he deserved whatever might come his way. He had not asked to play, they had named

the stakes, he had warned them, and gave them the first move; there was nothing unfair about Stavlokratz.

I had never seen Stavlokratz before, but I had played over nearly every one of his games in the World Championship for the last three or four years; he was always of course the model chosen by students. Only young chess-players can appreciate my delight at seeing him play first hand.

Well, the sailors used to lower their heads almost as low as the table and mutter together before every move, but they muttered so low that you could not hear what they planned.

They lost three pawns almost straight off, then a knight, and shortly after a bishop; they were playing in fact the famous Three Sailors' Gambit.

Stavlokratz was playing with the easy confidence that they say was usual with him, when suddenly at about the thirteenth move I saw him look surprised; he leaned forward and looked at the board and then at the sailors, but he learned nothing from their vacant faces; he looked back at the board again.

He moved more deliberately after that; the sailors lost two more pawns, Stavlokratz had lost nothing as yet. He looked at me I thought almost irritably, as though something would happen that he wished I was not there to see. I believed at first that he had qualms about taking the sailors' pound, until it dawned on me that he might lose the game; I saw that possibility in his face, not on the board, for the game had become almost incomprehensible to me. I cannot describe my astonishment. And a few moves later Stavlokratz resigned.

The sailors showed no more elation than if they had won some game with greasy cards, playing amongst themselves.

Stavlokratz asked them where they got their opening. "We kind of thought of it," said one. "It just come into our heads like," said another. He asked them questions about the ports they had touched at. He evidently thought as I did myself that they had learned their extraordinary gambit, perhaps in some old dependancy of Spain, from some young master of chess whose fame had not reached Europe. He was very eager to find out who this man could be, for neither of us imagined that those sailors had invented it, nor would anyone who had seen them. But he got no information from the sailors.

Stavlokratz could very ill afford the loss of a pound. He offered to play them again for the same stakes. The sailors began to set up the white pieces.

Stavlokratz pointed out that it was his turn for the first move. The sailors agreed but continued to set up the white pieces and sat with the white before them waiting for him to move. It was a trivial incident, but it revealed to Stavlokratz and myself that none of these sailors was aware that white always moves first.

Stavlokratz played them on his own opening, reasoning of course that as they had never heard of Stavlokratz they would not know of his opening; and with probably a very good hope of getting back his pound he played the fifth variation with its tricky seventh move, at least so he intended, but it turned to a variation unknown to the students of Stavlokratz.

Throughout this game I watched the sailors closely, and I became sure, as only an attentive watcher can be, that the one on their left, Jim Bunion, did not even know the moves.

When I had made up my mind about this I watched only the other two, Adam Bailey and Bill Sloggs, trying to make out which was the master mind; and for a long while I could not. And then I heard Adam Bailey mutter six words, the only words I heard throughout the game, of all their consultations, "No, him with the horse's head." And I decided that Adam Bailey did not know what a knight was, though of course he might have been explaining things to Bill Sloggs, but it did not sound like that; so that left Bill Sloggs. I watched Bill Sloggs after that with a certain wonder; he was no more intellectual than the others to look at, though rather more forceful perhaps. Poor old Stavlokratz was beaten again.

Well, in the end I paid for Stavlokratz, and tried to get a game with Bill Sloggs alone, but this he would not agree to, it must be all three or none: and then I went back with Stavlokratz to his lodgings. He very kindly gave me a game: of course it did not last long but I am prouder of having been beaten by Stavlokratz than of any game that I have ever won. And then we talked for an hour about the sailors, and neither of us could make head or tail of them. I told him what I had noticed about Jim Bunion and Adam Bailey, and he agreed with me that Bill Sloggs was the man, though as to how he had come by that gambit or that variation of Stavlokratz's own opening he had no theory.

I had the sailors' address which was that tavern as much as anywhere, and they were to be there all evening. As evening drew in I went back to the tavern, and found there still the three sailors. And I offered Bill Sloggs two pounds for a game with him alone and he refused, but in the end he played

me for a drink. And then I found that he had not heard of the “en passant” rule, and believed that the fact of checking the king prevented him from castling, and did not know that a player can have two or more queens on the board at the same time if he queens his pawns, or that a pawn could ever become a knight; and he made as many of the stock mistakes as he had time for in a short game, which I won. I thought that I should have got at the secret then, but his mates who had sat scowling all the while in the corner came up and interfered. It was a breach of their compact apparently for one to play by himself, at any rate they seemed angry. So I left the tavern then and came back again next day, and the next day and the day after, and often saw the sailors, but none were in a communicative mood. I had got Stavlokratz to keep away, and they could get no one to play chess with at a pound a side, and I would not play with them unless they told me the secret.

And then one evening I found Jim Bunion drunk, yet not so drunk as he wished, for the two pounds were spent; and I gave him very nearly a tumbler of whiskey, or what passed for whiskey in that tavern at Over, and he told me the secret at once. I had given the others some whiskey to keep them quiet, and later on in the evening they must have gone out, but Jim Bunion stayed with me by a little table leaning across it and talking low, right into my face, his breath smelling all the while of what passed for whiskey.

The wind was blowing outside as it does on bad nights in November, coming up with moans from the South, towards which the tavern faced with all its leaded panes, so that none but I was able to hear his voice as Jim Bunion gave up his secret. They had sailed for years, he told me, with Bill Snyth; and on their last voyage home Bill Snyth had died. And he was buried at sea. Just the other side of the line they buried him, and his pals divided his kit, and these three got his crystal that only they knew he had, which Bill got one night in Cuba. They played chess with the crystal.

And he was going on to tell me about that night in Cuba when Bill had bought the crystal from the stranger, how some folks might think they had seen thunderstorms, but let them go and listen to that one that thundered in Cuba when Bill was buying his crystal and they’d find that they didn’t know what thunder was. But then I interrupted him, unfortunately perhaps, for it broke the thread of his tale and set him rambling a while, and cursing other people and talking of other lands, China, Port Said and Spain: but I brought him back to Cuba again in the end. I asked him how they could

play chess with a crystal; and he said that you looked at the board and looked at the crystal, and there was the game in the crystal the same as it was on the board, with all the odd little pieces looking just the same though smaller, horses' heads and whatnots; and as soon as the other man moved the move came out in the crystal, and then your move appeared after it, and all you had to do was to make it on the board. If you didn't make the move that you saw in the crystal things got very bad in it, everything horribly mixed and moving about rapidly, and scowling and making the same move over and over again, and the crystal getting cloudier and cloudier; it was best to take one's eyes away from it then, or one dreamt about it afterwards, and the foul little pieces came and cursed you in your sleep and moved about all night with their crooked moves.

I thought then that, drunk though he was, he was not telling the truth, and I promised to show him to people who played chess all their lives so that he and his mates could get a pound whenever they liked, and I promised not to reveal his secret even to Stavlokratz, if only he would tell me all the truth; and this promise I have kept till long after the three sailors have lost their secret. I told him straight out that I did not believe in the crystal. Well, Jim Bunion leaned forward then, even further across the table, and swore he had seen the man from whom Bill had bought the crystal and that he was one to whom anything was possible. To begin with his hair was villainously dark, and his features were unmistakable even down there in the South, and he could play chess with his eyes shut, and even then he could beat anyone in Cuba. But there was more than this, there was the bargain he made with Bill that told one who he was. He sold that crystal for Bill Snyth's soul.

Jim Bunion leaning over the table with his breath in my face nodded his head several times and was silent.

I began to question him then. Did they play chess as far away as Cuba? He said they all did. Was it conceivable that any man would make such a bargain as Snyth made? Wasn't the trick well known? Wasn't it in hundreds of books? And if he couldn't read books mustn't he have heard from sailors that it is the Devil's commonest dodge to get souls from silly people?

Jim Bunion had leant back in his own chair quietly smiling at my questions but when I mentioned silly people he leaned forward again, and thrust his face close to mine and asked me several times if I called Bill Snyth silly. It seemed that these three sailors thought a great deal of Bill Snyth and it made Jim Bunion angry to hear anything said against him. I

hastened to say that the bargain seemed silly though not of course the man who made it; for the sailor was almost threatening, and no wonder for the whiskey in that dim tavern would madden a nun.

When I said that the bargain seemed silly he smiled again, and then he thundered his fist down on the table and said that no one had ever yet got the best of Bill Snyth and that that was the worst bargain for himself that the Devil ever made, and that from all he had read or heard of the Devil he had never been so badly had before as the night when he met Bill Snyth at the inn in the thunderstorm in Cuba, for Bill Snyth already had the damndest soul at sea; Bill was a good fellow, but his soul was damned right enough, so he got the crystal for nothing.

Yes, he was there and saw it all himself, Bill Snyth in the Spanish inn and the candles flaring, and the Devil walking in and out of the rain, and then the bargain between those two old hands, and the Devil going out into the lightning, and the thunderstorm raging on, and Bill Snyth sitting chuckling to himself between the bursts of the thunder.

But I had more questions to ask and interrupted this reminiscence. Why did they all three always play together? And a look of something like fear came over Jim Bunion's face; and at first he would not speak. And then he said to me that it was like this; they had not paid for that crystal, but got it as their share of Bill Snyth's kit. If they had paid for it or given something in exchange to Bill Snyth that would have been all right, but they couldn't do that now because Bill was dead, and they were not sure if the old bargain might not hold good. And Hell must be a large and lonely place, and to go there alone must be bad, and so the three agreed that they would all stick together, and use the crystal all three or not at all, unless one died, and then the two would use it and the one that was gone would wait for them. And the last of the three to go would take the crystal with him, or maybe the crystal would bring him. They didn't think, they said, they were the kind of men for Heaven, and he hoped they knew their place better than that, but they didn't fancy the notion of Hell alone, if Hell it had to be. It was all right for Bill Snyth, he was afraid of nothing. He had known perhaps five men that were not afraid of death, but Bill Snyth was not afraid of Hell. He died with a smile on his face like a child in its sleep; it was drink killed poor Bill Snyth.

This was why I had beaten Bill Sloggs; Sloggs had the crystal on him while we played, but would not use it; these sailors seemed to fear

loneliness as some people fear being hurt; he was the only one of the three who could play chess at all, he had learnt it in order to be able to answer questions and keep up their pretence, but he had learnt it badly, as I found. I never saw the crystal, they never showed it to anyone; but Jim Bunion told me that night that it was about the size that the thick end of a hen's egg would be if it were round. And then he fell asleep.

There were many more questions that I would have asked him but I could not wake him up. I even pulled the table away so that he fell to the floor, but he slept on, and all the tavern was dark but for one candle burning; and it was then that I noticed for the first time that the other two sailors had gone, no one remained at all but Jim Bunion and I and the sinister barman of that curious inn, and he too was asleep.

When I saw that it was impossible to wake the sailor I went out into the night. Next day Jim Bunion would talk of it no more; and when I went back to Stavlokratz I found him already putting on paper his theory about the sailors, which became accepted by chess-players, that one of them had been taught their curious gambit and that the other two between them had learnt all the defensive openings as well as general play. Though who taught them no one could say, in spite of enquiries made afterwards all along the Southern Pacific.

I never learnt any more details from any of the three sailors, they were always too drunk to speak or else not drunk enough to be communicative. I seem just to have taken Jim Bunion at the flood. But I kept my promise, it was I that introduced them to the Tournament, and a pretty mess they made of established reputations. And so they kept on for months, never losing a game and always playing for their pound a side. I used to follow them wherever they went merely to watch their play. They were more marvellous than Stavlokratz even in his youth.

But then they took to liberties such as giving their queen when playing first-class players. And in the end one day when all three were drunk they played the best player in England with only a row of pawns. They won the game all right. But the ball broke to pieces. I never smelt such a stench in all my life.

The three sailors took it stoically enough, they signed on to different ships and went back again to the sea, and the world of chess lost sight, for ever I trust, of the most remarkable players it ever knew, who would have altogether spoiled the game.

The Exiles Club

It was an evening party; and something someone had said to me had started me talking about a subject that to me is full of fascination, the subject of old religions, forsaken gods. The truth (for all religions have some of it), the wisdom, the beauty, of the religions of countries to which I travel have not the same appeal for me; for one only notices in them their tyranny and intolerance and the abject servitude that they claim from thought; but when a dynasty has been dethroned in heaven and goes forgotten and outcast even among men, one's eyes no longer dazzled by its power find something very wistful in the faces of fallen gods suppliant to be remembered, something almost tearfully beautiful, like a long warm summer twilight fading gently away after some day memorable in the story of earthly wars. Between what Zeus, for instance, has been once and the half-remembered tale he is today there lies a space so great that there is no change of fortune known to man whereby we may measure the height down which he has fallen. And it is the same with many another god at whom once the ages trembled and the twentieth century treats as an old wives' tale. The fortitude that such a fall demands is surely more than human.

Some such things as these I was saying, and being upon a subject that much attracts me I possibly spoke too loudly, certainly I was not aware that standing close behind me was no less a person than the ex-King of Eritivaria, the thirty islands of the East, or I would have moderated my voice and moved away a little to give him more room. I was not aware of his presence until his satellite, one who had fallen with him into exile but still revolved about him, told me that his master desired to know me; and so to my surprise I was presented though neither of them even knew my name. And that was how I came to be invited by the ex-King to dine at his club.

At the time I could only account for his wishing to know me by supposing that he found in his own exiled condition some likeness to the fallen fortunes of the gods of whom I talked unwitting of his presence; but now I know that it was not of himself he was thinking when he asked me to dine at that club.

The club would have been the most imposing building in any street in London, but in that obscure mean quarter of London in which they had built it it appeared unduly enormous. Lifting right up above those grotesque

houses and built in that Greek style that we call Georgian, there was something Olympian about it. To my host an unfashionable street could have meant nothing, through all his youth wherever he had gone had become fashionable the moment he went there; words like the East End could have had no meaning to him.

Whoever built that house had enormous wealth and cared nothing for fashion, perhaps despised it. As I stood gazing at the magnificent upper windows draped with great curtains, indistinct in the evening, on which huge shadows flickered my host attracted my attention from the doorway, and so I went in and met for the second time the ex-King of Eritivaria.

In front of us a stairway of rare marble led upwards, he took me through a side-door and downstairs and we came to a banqueting-hall of great magnificence. A long table ran up the middle of it, laid for quite twenty people, and I noticed the peculiarity that instead of chairs there were thrones for everyone except me, who was the only guest and for whom there was an ordinary chair. My host explained to me when we all sat down that everyone who belonged to that club was by rights a king.

In fact none was permitted, he told me, to belong to the club until his claim to a kingdom made out in writing had been examined and allowed by those whose duty it was. The whim of a populace or the candidate's own misrule were never considered by the investigators, nothing counted with them but heredity and lawful descent from kings, all else was ignored. At that table there were those who had once reigned themselves, others lawfully claimed descent from kings that the world had forgotten, the kingdoms claimed by some had even changed their names. Hatzgurh, the mountain kingdom, is almost regarded as mythical.

I have seldom seen greater splendour than that long hall provided below the level of the street. No doubt by day it was a little sombre, as all basements are, but at night with its great crystal chandeliers, and the glitter of heirlooms that had gone into exile, it surpassed the splendour of palaces that have only one king. They had come to London suddenly most of those kings, or their fathers before them, or forefathers; some had come away from their kingdoms by night, in a light sleigh, flogging the horses, or had galloped clear with morning over the border, some had trudged roads for days from their capital in disguise, yet many had had time just as they left to snatch up some small thing without price in markets, for the sake of old times as they said, but quite as much, I thought, with an eye to the future.

And there these treasures glittered on that long table in the banqueting-hall of the basement of that strange club. Merely to see them was much, but to hear their story that their owners told was to go back in fancy to epic times on the romantic border of fable and fact, where the heroes of history fought with the gods of myth. The famous silver horses of Gilgianza were there climbing their sheer mountain, which they did by miraculous means before the time of the Goths. It was not a large piece of silver but its workmanship outrivalled the skill of the bees.

A yellow Emperor had brought out of the East a piece of that incomparable porcelain that had made his dynasty famous though all their deeds are forgotten, it had the exact shade of the right purple.

And there was a little golden statuette of a dragon stealing a diamond from a lady, the dragon had the diamond in his claws, large and of the first water. There had been a kingdom whose whole constitution and history were founded on the legend, from which alone its kings had claimed their right to the scepter, that a dragon stole a diamond from a lady. When its last king left that country, because his favorite general used a peculiar formation under the fire of artillery, he brought with him the little ancient image that no longer proved him a king outside that singular club.

There was the pair of amethyst cups of the turbaned King of Foo, the one that he drank from himself, and the one that he gave to his enemies, eye could not tell which was which.

All these things the ex-King of Eritivaria showed me, telling me a marvelous tale of each; of his own he had brought nothing, except the mascot that used once to sit on the top of the water tube of his favorite motor.

I have not outlined a tenth of the splendour of that table, I had meant to come again and examine each piece of plate and make notes of its history; had I known that this was the last time I should wish to enter that club I should have looked at its treasures more attentively, but now as the wine went round and the exiles began to talk I took my eyes from the table and listened to strange tales of their former state.

He that has seen better times has usually a poor tale to tell, some mean and trivial thing has been his undoing, but they that dined in that basement had mostly fallen like oaks on nights of abnormal tempest, had fallen mightily and shaken a nation. Those who had not been kings themselves, but claimed through an exiled ancestor, had stories to tell of even grander

disaster, history seeming to have mellowed their dynasty's fate as moss grows over an oak a great while fallen. There were no jealousies there as so often there are among kings, rivalry must have ceased with the loss of their navies and armies, and they showed no bitterness against those that had turned them out, one speaking of the error of his Prime Minister by which he had lost his throne as "poor old Friedrich's Heaven-sent gift of tactlessness."

They gossiped pleasantly of many things, the tittle-tattle we all had to know when we were learning history, and many a wonderful story I might have heard, many a side light on mysterious wars had I not made use of one unfortunate word. That word was "upstairs."

The ex-King of Eritivaria having pointed out to me those unparalleled heirlooms to which I have alluded, and many more besides, hospitably asked me if there was anything else that I would care to see, he meant the pieces of plate that they had in the cupboards, the curiously graven swords of other princes, historic jewels, legendary seals, but I who had had a glimpse of their marvelous staircase, whose balustrade I believed to be solid gold and wondering why in such a stately house they chose to dine in the basement, mentioned the word "upstairs." A profound hush came down on the whole assembly, the hush that might greet levity in a cathedral.

"Upstairs!" he gasped. "We cannot go upstairs."

I perceived that what I had said was an ill-chosen thing. I tried to excuse myself but knew not how.

"Of course," I muttered, "members may not take guests upstairs."

"Members!" he said to me. "We are not the members!"

There was such reproof in his voice that I said no more, I looked at him questioningly, perhaps my lips moved, I may have said "What are you?" A great surprise had come on me at their attitude.

"We are the waiters," he said.

That I could not have known, here at last was honest ignorance that I had no need to be ashamed of, the very opulence of their table denied it.

"Then who are the members?" I asked.

Such a hush fell at that question, such a hush of genuine awe, that all of a sudden a wild thought entered my head, a thought strange and fantastic and terrible. I gripped my host by the wrist and hushed my voice.

"Are they too exiles?" I asked.

Twice as he looked in my face he gravely nodded his head.

I left that club very swiftly indeed, never to see it again, scarcely pausing to say farewell to those menial kings, and as I left the door a great window opened far up at the top of the house and a flash of lightning streamed from it and killed a dog.

The Three Infernal Jokes

This is the story that the desolate man told to me on the lonely Highland road one autumn evening with winter coming on and the stags roaring.

The saddening twilight, the mountain already black, the dreadful melancholy of the stags' voices, his friendless mournful face, all seemed to be of some most sorrowful play staged in that valley by an outcast god, a lonely play of which the hills were part and he the only actor.

For long we watched each other drawing out of the solitudes of those forsaken spaces. Then when we met he spoke.

"I will tell you a thing that will make you die of laughter. I will keep it to myself no longer. But first I must tell you how I came by it."

I do not give the story in his words with all his woeful interjections and the misery of his frantic self-reproaches for I would not convey unnecessarily to my readers that atmosphere of sadness that was about all he said and that seemed to go with him where-ever he moved.

It seems that he had been a member of a club, a West-end club he called it, a respectable but quite inferior affair, probably in the City: agents belonged to it, fire insurance mostly, but life insurance and motor-agents too, it was in fact a touts' club. It seems that a few of them one evening, forgetting for a moment their encyclopedias and non-stop tyres, were talking loudly over a card-table when the game had ended about their personal virtues, and a very little man with waxed moustaches who disliked the taste of wine was boasting heartily of his temperance. It was then that he who told this mournful story, drawn on by the boasts of others, leaned forward a little over the green baize into the light of the two guttering candles and revealed, no doubt a little shyly, his own extraordinary virtue. One woman was to him as ugly as another.

And the silenced boasters rose and went home to bed leaving him all alone, as he supposed, with his unequalled virtue. And yet he was not alone, for when the rest had gone there arose a member out of a deep arm-chair at the dark end of the room and walked across to him, a man whose occupation he did not know and only now suspects.

"You have," said the stranger, "a surpassing virtue."

"I have no possible use for it," my poor friend replied.

"Then doubtless you would sell it cheap," said the stranger.

Something in the man's manner or appearance made the desolate teller of this mournful tale feel his own inferiority, which probably made him feel acutely shy, so that his mind abased itself as an Oriental does his body in the presence of a superior, or perhaps he was sleepy, or merely a little drunk. Whatever it was he only mumbled, "O yes," instead of contradicting so mad a remark. And the stranger led the way to the room where the telephone was.

"I think you will find my firm will give a good price for it," he said: and without more ado he began with a pair of pincers to cut the wire of the telephone and the receiver. The old waiter who looked after the club they had left shuffling round the other room putting things away for the night.

"Whatever are you doing of?" said my friend.

"This way," said the stranger. Along a passage they went and away to the back of the club and there the stranger leaned out of a window and fastened the severed wires to the lightning conductor. My friend has no doubt of that, a broad ribbon of copper, half an inch wide, perhaps wider, running down from the roof to the earth.

"Hell," said the stranger with his mouth to the telephone; then silence for a while with his ear to the receiver, leaning out of the window. And then my friend heard his poor virtue being several times repeated, and then words like Yes and No.

"They offer you three jokes," said the stranger, "which shall make all who hear them simply die of laughter."

I think my friend was reluctant then to have anything more to do with it, he wanted to go home; he said he didn't want jokes.

"They think very highly of your virtue," I said the stranger. And at that, odd as it seems, my friend wavered, for logically if they thought highly of the goods they should have paid a higher price.

"O all right," he said. The extraordinary document that the agent drew from his pocket ran something like this:

"I . . . . . in consideration of three new jokes received from Mr. Montagu-Montague, hereinafter to be called the agent, and warranted to be as by him stated and described, do assign to him, yield, abrogate and give up all recognitions, emoluments, perquisites or rewards due to me Here or Elsewhere on account of the following virtue, to wit and that is to say . . . . . that all women are to me equally ugly." The last eight words being filled in in ink by Mr. Montagu-Montague.

My poor friend duly signed it. “These are the jokes,” said the agent. They were boldly written on three slips of paper. “They don’t seem very funny,” said the other when he had read them. “You are immune,” said Mr. Montagu-Montague, “but anyone else who hears them will simply die of laughter: that we guarantee.”

An American firm had bought at the price of waste paper a hundred thousand copies of The Dictionary of Electricity written when electricity was new, — and it had turned out that even at the time its author had not rightly grasped his subject, — the firm had paid £10,000 to a respectable English paper (no other in fact than the Briton) for the use of its name, and to obtain orders for The Briton Dictionary of Electricity was the occupation of my unfortunate friend. He seems to have had a way with him. Apparently he knew by a glance at a man, or a look round at his garden, whether to recommend the book as “an absolutely up-to-date achievement, the finest thing of its kind in the world of modern science” or as “at once quaint and imperfect, a thing to buy and to keep as a tribute to those dear old times that are gone.” So he went on with this quaint though usual business, putting aside the memory of that night as an occasion on which he had “somewhat exceeded” as they say in circles where a spade is called neither a spade nor an agricultural implement but is never mentioned at all, being altogether too vulgar. And then one night he put on his suit of dress clothes and found the three jokes in the pocket. That was perhaps a shock. He seems to have thought it over carefully then, and the end of it was he gave a dinner at the club to twenty of the members. The dinner would do no harm he thought — might even help the business, and if the joke came off he would be a witty fellow, and two jokes still up his sleeve.

Whom he invited or how the dinner went I do not know for he began to speak rapidly and came straight to the point, as a stick that nears a cataract suddenly goes faster and faster. The dinner was duly served, the port went round, the twenty men were smoking, two waiters loitered, when he after carefully reading the best of the jokes told it down the table. They laughed. One man accidentally inhaled his cigar smoke and spluttered, the two waiters overheard and tittered behind their hands, one man, a bit of a raconteur himself, quite clearly wished not to laugh, but his veins swelled dangerously in trying to keep it back, and in the end he laughed too. The joke had succeeded; my friend smiled at the thought; he wished to say little deprecating things to the man on his right; but the laughter did not stop and

the waiters would not be silent. He waited, and waited wondering; the laughter went roaring on, distinctly louder now, and the waiters as loud as any. It had gone on for three or four minutes when this frightful thought leaped up all at once in his mind: *it was forced laughter!* However could anything have induced him to tell so foolish a joke? He saw its absurdity as in revelation; and the more he thought of it as these people laughed at him, even the waiters too, the more he felt that he could never lift up his head with his brother touts again. And still the laughter went roaring and choking on. He was very angry. There was not much use in having a friend, he thought, if one silly joke could not be overlooked; he had fed them too. And then he felt that he had no friends at all, and his anger faded away, and a great unhappiness came down on him, and he got quietly up and slunk from the room and slipped away from the club. Poor man, he scarcely had the heart next morning even to glance at the papers, but you did not need to glance at them, big type was bandied about that day as though it were common type, the words of the headlines stared at you; and the headlines said: — Twenty-Two Dead Men at a Club.

Yes, he saw it then: the laughter had not stopped, some had probably burst blood vessels, some must have choked, some succumbed to nausea, heart-failure must have mercifully taken some, and they were his friends after all, and none had escaped, not I even the waiters. It was that infernal joke.

He thought out swiftly, and remembers clear as a nightmare, the drive to Victoria Station, the boat-train to Dover and going disguised to the boat: and on the boat pleasantly smiling, almost obsequious, two constables that wished to speak for a moment with Mr. Watkyn-Jones. That was his name.

In a third-class carriage with handcuffs on his wrists, with forced conversation when any, he returned between his captors to Victoria to be tried for murder at the High Court of Bow.

At the trial he was defended by a young barrister of considerable ability who had gone into the Cabinet in order to enhance his forensic reputation. And he was ably defended. It is no exaggeration to say that the speech for the defence showed it to be usual, even natural and right, to give a dinner to twenty men and to slip away without ever saying a word, leaving all, with the waiters, dead. That was the impression left in the minds of the jury. And Mr. Watkyn-Jones felt himself practically free, with all the advantages of his awful experience, and his two jokes intact. But lawyers are still

experimenting with the new act which allows a prisoner to give evidence. They do not like to make no use of it for fear they may be thought not to know of the act, and a lawyer who is not in touch with the very latest laws is soon regarded as not being up to date and he may drop as much as £50,000 a year in fees. And therefore though it always hangs their clients they hardly like to neglect it.

Mr. Watkyn-Jones was put in the witness box. There he told the simple truth, and a very poor affair it seemed after the impassioned and beautiful things that were uttered by the counsel for the defence. Men and women had wept when they heard that. They did not weep when they heard Watkyn-Jones. Some tittered. It no longer seemed a right and natural thing to leave one's guests all dead and to fly the country. Where was Justice, they asked, if anyone could do that? And when his story was told the judge rather happily asked if he could make him die of laughter too. And what was the joke? For in so grave a place as a Court of Justice no fatal effects need be feared. And hesitatingly the prisoner pulled from his pocket the three slips of paper: and perceived for the first time that the one on which the first and best joke had been written had become quite blank. Yet he could remember it, and only too clearly. And he told it from memory to the Court.

"An Irishman once on being asked by his master to buy a morning paper said in his usual witty way, 'Arrah and begorrah and I will be after wishing you the top of the morning.'"

No joke sounds quite so good the second time it is told, it seems to lose something of its essence, but Watkyn-Jones was not prepared for the awful stillness with which this one was received; nobody smiled; and it had killed twenty-two men. The joke was bad, devilish bad; counsel for the defence was frowning, and an usher was looking in a little bag for something the judge wanted. And at this moment, as though from far away, without his wishing it, there entered the prisoner's head, and shone there and would not go, this old bad proverb: "As well be hung for a sheep as for a lamb." The jury seemed to be just about to retire. "I have another joke," said Watkyn-Jones, and then and there he read from the second slip of paper. He watched the paper curiously to see if it would go blank, occupying his mind with so slight a thing as men in dire distress very often do, and the words were almost immediately expunged, swept swiftly as if by a hand, and he saw the paper before him as blank as the first. And they were laughing this time,

judge, jury, counsel for the prosecution, audience and all, and the grim men that watched him upon either side. There was no mistake about this joke.

He did not stay to see the end, and walked out with his eyes fixed on the ground, unable to bear a glance to the right or left. And since then he has wandered, avoiding ports and roaming lonely places. Two years have known him on the Highland roads, often hungry, always friendless, always changing his district, wandering lonely on with his deadly joke.

Sometimes for a moment he will enter inns, driven by cold and hunger, and hear men in the evening telling jokes and even challenging him; but he sits desolate and silent, lest his only weapon should escape from him and his last joke spread mourning in a hundred cots. His beard has grown and turned grey and is mixed with moss and weeds, so that no one, I think, not even the police, would recognise him now for that dapper tout that sold The Briton Dictionary of Electricity in such a different land.

He paused, his story told, and then his lip quivered as though he would say more, and I believe he intended then and there to yield up his deadly joke on that Highland road and to go forth then with his three blank slips of paper, perhaps to a felon's cell, with one more murder added to his crimes, but harmless at last to man. I therefore hurried on, and only heard him mumbling sadly behind me, standing bowed and broken, all alone in the twilight, perhaps telling over and over even then the last infernal joke.

THE END

TALES OF WAR



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The Prayer of the Men of Daleswood

He said: “There were only twenty houses in Daleswood. A place you would scarcely have heard of. A village up top of the hills.

“When the war came there was no more than thirty men there between sixteen and forty-five. They all went.

“They all kept together; same battalion, same platoon. They was like that in Daleswood. Used to call the hop pickers foreigners, the ones that come from London. They used to go past Daleswood, some of them, every year, on their way down to the hop fields. Foreigners they used to call them. Kept very much to themselves, did the Daleswood people. Big woods all round them.

“Very lucky they was, the Daleswood men. They’d lost no more than five killed and a good sprinkling of wounded. But all the wounded was back again with the platoon. This was up to March when the big offensive started.

“It came very sudden. No bombardment to speak of. Just a burst of Tok Emmas going off all together and lifting the front trench clean out of it; then a barrage behind, and the Boche pouring over in thousands. ‘Our luck is holding good,’ the Daleswood men said, for their trench wasn’t getting it at all. But the platoon on their right got it. And it sounded bad too a long way beyond that. No one could be quite sure. But the platoon on their right was getting it: that was sure enough.

“And then the Boche got through them altogether. A message came to say so. ‘How are things on the right?’ they said to the runner. ‘Bad,’ said the runner, and he went back, though Lord knows what he went back to. The Boche was through right enough. ‘We’ll have to make a defensive flank,’ said the platoon commander. He was a Daleswood man too. Came from the big farm. He slipped down a communication trench with a few men, mostly bombers. And they reckoned they wouldn’t see any of them any more, for the Boche was on the right, thick as starlings.

“The bullets were snapping over thick to keep them down while the Boche went on, on the right: machine guns, of course. The barrage was screaming well over and dropping far back, and their wire was still all right just in front of them, when they put up a head to look. There was the left platoon of the battalion. One doesn’t bother, somehow, so much about

another battalion as one's own. One's own gets sort of homely. And there they were wondering how their own officer was getting on, and the few fellows with them, on his defensive flank. The bombs were going off thick. All the Daleswood men were firing half right. It sounded from the noise as if it couldn't last long, as if it would soon be decisive, and the battle be won, or lost, just there on the right, and perhaps the war ended. They didn't notice the left. Nothing to speak of.

"Then a runner came from the left. 'Hullo!' they said, 'How are things over there?'

"'The Boche is through,' he said. 'Where's the officer?' 'Through!' they said. It didn't seem possible. However did he do that? they thought. And the runner went on to the right to look for the officer.

"And then the barrage shifted further back. The shells still screamed over them, but the bursts were further away. That is always a relief. Probably they felt it. But it was bad for all that. Very bad. It meant the Boche was well past them. They realized it after a while.

"They and their bit of wire were somehow just between two waves of attack. Like a bit of stone on the beach with the sea coming in. A platoon was nothing to the Boche; nothing much perhaps just then to anybody. But it was the whole of Daleswood for one long generation.

"The youngest full-grown man they had left behind was fifty, and some one had heard that he had died since the war. There was no one else in Daleswood but women and children, and boys up to seventeen.

"The bombing had stopped on their right; everything was quieter, and the barrage further away. When they began to realize what that meant they began to talk of Daleswood. And then they thought that when all of them were gone there would be nobody who would remember Daleswood just as it used to be. For places alter a little, woods grow, and changes come, trees get cut down, old people die; new houses are built now and then in place of a yew tree, or any old thing, that used to be there before; and one way or another the old things go; and all the time you have people thinking that the old times were best, and the old ways when they were young. And the Daleswood men were beginning to say, 'Who would there be to remember it just as it was?'

"There was no gas, the wind being wrong for it, so they were able to talk, that is if they shouted, for the bullets alone made as much noise as breaking up an old shed, crisper like, more like new timber breaking; and

the shells of course was howling all the time, that is the barrage that was bursting far back. The trench still stank of them.

"They said that one of them must go over and put his hands up, or run away if he could, whichever he liked, and when the war was over he would go to some writing fellow, one of those what makes a living by it, and tell him all about Daleswood, just as it used to be, and he would write it out proper and there it would be for always. They all agreed to that. And then they talked a bit, as well as they could above that awful screeching, to try and decide who it should be. The eldest, they said, would know Daleswood best. But he said, and they came to agree with him, that it would be a sort of waste to save the life of a man what had had his good time, and they ought to send the youngest, and they would tell him all they knew of Daleswood before his time, and everything would be written down just the same and the old time remembered.

"They had the idea somehow that the women thought more of their own man and their children and the washing and what-not; and that the deep woods and the great hills beyond, and the plowing and the harvest and snaring rabbits in winter and the sports in the village in summer, and the hundred things that pass the time of one generation in an old, old place like Daleswood, meant less to them than the men. Anyhow they did not quite seem to trust them with the past.

"The youngest of them was only just eighteen. That was Dick. They told him to get out and put his hands up and be quick getting across, as soon as they had told him one or two things about the old time in Daleswood that a youngster like him wouldn't know.

"Well, Dick said he wasn't going, and was making trouble about it, so they told Fred to go. Back, they told him, was best, and come up behind the Boche with his hands up; they would be less likely to shoot when it was back towards their own supports.

"Fred wouldn't go, and so on with the rest. Well, they didn't waste time quarrelling, time being scarce, and they said what was to be done? There was chalk where they were, low down in the trench, a little brown clay on the top of it. There was a great block of it loose near a shelter. They said they would carve with their knives on the big bowlder of chalk all that they knew about Daleswood. They would write where it was and just what it was like, and they would write something of all those little things that pass with a generation. They reckoned on having the time for it. It would take a direct

hit with something large, what they call big stuff, to do any harm to that bowlder. They had no confidence in paper, it got so messed up when you were hit; besides, the Boche had been using thermite. Burns, that does.

"They'd one or two men that were handy at carving chalk; used to do the regimental crest and pictures of Hindenburg, and all that. They decided they'd do it in reliefs.

"They started smoothing the chalk. They had nothing more to do but just to think what to write. It was a great big bowlder with plenty of room on it. The Boche seemed not to know that they hadn't killed the Daleswood men, just as the sea mightn't know that one stone stayed dry at the coming in of the tide. A gap between two divisions probably.

"Harry wanted to tell of the woods more than anything. He was afraid they might cut them down because of the war, and no one would know of the larks they had had there as boys. Wonderful old woods they were, with a lot of Spanish chestnut growing low, and tall old oaks over it. Harry wanted them to write down what the foxgloves were like in the wood at the end of summer, standing there in the evening, 'Great solemn rows,' he said, 'all odd in the dusk. All odd in the evening, going there after work; and makes you think of fairies.' There was lots of things about those woods, he said, that ought to be put down if people were to remember Daleswood as it used to be when they knew it. What were the good old days without those woods? he said.

"But another wanted to tell of the time when they cut the hay with scythes, working all those long days at the end of June; there would be no more of that, he said, with machines come in and all.

"There was room to tell of all that and the woods too, said the others, so long as they put it short like.

"And another wanted to tell of the valleys beyond the wood, far afield where the men went working; the women would remember the hay. The great valleys he'd tell of. It was they that made Daleswood. The valleys beyond the wood and the twilight on them in summer. Slopes covered with mint and thyme, all solemn at evening. A hare on them perhaps, sitting as though they were his, then lolloping slowly away. It didn't seem from the way he told of those old valleys that he thought they could ever be to other folk what they were to the Daleswood men in the days he remembered. He spoke of them as though there were something in them, besides the mint

and the thyme and the twilight and hares, that would not stay after these men were gone, though he did not say what it was. Scarcely hinted it even.

"And still the Boche did nothing to the Daleswood men. The bullets had ceased altogether. That made it much quieter. The shells still snarled over, bursting far, far away.

"And Bob said tell of Daleswood itself, the old village, with queer chimneys, of red brick, in the wood. There weren't houses like that nowadays. They'd be building new ones and spoiling it, likely, after the war. And that was all he had to say.

"And nobody was for not putting down anything any one said. It was all to go in on the chalk, as much as would go in the time. For they all sort of understood that the Daleswood of what they called the good old time was just the memories that those few men had of the days they had spent there together. And that was the Daleswood they loved, and wanted folks to remember. They were all agreed as to that. And then they said how was they to write it down. And when it came to writing there was so much to be said, not spread over a lot of paper I don't mean, but going down so deep like, that it seemed to them how their own talk wouldn't be good enough to say it. And they knew no other, and didn't know what to do. I reckon they'd been reading magazines and thought that writing had to be like that muck. Anyway, they didn't know what to do. I reckon their talk would be good enough for Daleswood when they loved Daleswood like that. But they didn't, and they were puzzled.

"The Boche was miles away behind them now, and his barrage with him. Still in front he did nothing.

"They talked it all over and over, did the Daleswood men. They tried everything. But somehow or other they couldn't get near what they wanted to say about old summer evenings. Time wore on. The bowlder was smooth and ready, and that whole generation of Daleswood men could find no words to say what was in their hearts about Daleswood. There wasn't time to waste. And the only thing they thought of in the end was 'Please, God, remember Daleswood just like it used to be.' And Bill and Harry carved that on the chalk between them.

"What happened to the Daleswood men? Why, nothing. There come one of them counter-attacks, a regular bastard for Jerry. The French made it and did the Boche in proper. I got the story from a man with a hell of a great big hammer, long afterwards when that trench was well behind our line. He was

smashing up a huge great chunk of chalk because he said they all felt it was so damn silly."

The Road

The battery Sergeant-Major was practically asleep. He was all worn out by the continuous roar of bombardments that had been shaking the dugouts and dazing his brains for weeks. He was pretty well fed up.

The officer commanding the battery, a young man in a very neat uniform and of particularly high birth, came up and spat in his face. The Sergeant-Major sprang to attention, received an order, and took a stick at once and beat up the tired men. For a message had come to the battery that some English (God punish them!) were making a road at X.

The gun was fired. It was one of those unlucky shots that come on days when our luck is out. The shell, a 5.9, lit in the midst of the British working party. It did the Germans little good. It did not stop the deluge of shells that was breaking up their guns and was driving misery down like a wedge into their spirits. It did not improve the temper of the officer commanding the battery, so that the men suffered as acutely as ever under the Sergeant-Major. But it stopped the road for that day.

I seemed to see that road going on in a dream.

Another working party came along next day, with clay pipes and got to work; and next day and the day after. Shells came, but went short or over; the shell holes were neatly patched up; the road went on. Here and there a tree had to be cut, but not often, not many of them were left; it was mostly digging and grubbing up roots, and pushing wheelbarrows along planks and duck-boards, and filling up with stones. Sometimes the engineers would come: that was when streams were crossed. The engineers made their bridges, and the infantry working party went on with the digging and laying down stones. It was monotonous work. Contours altered, soil altered, even the rock beneath it, but the desolation never; they always worked in desolation and thunder. And so the road went on.

They came to a wide river. They went through a great forest. They passed the ruins of what must have been quite fine towns, big prosperous towns with universities in them. I saw the infantry working party with their stumpy clay pipes, in my dream, a long way on from where that shell had lit, which stopped the road for a day. And behind them curious changes came over the road at X. You saw the infantry going up to the trenches, and going back along it into reserve. They marched at first, but in a few days

they were going up in motors, grey busses with shuttered windows. And then the guns came along it, miles and miles of guns, following after the thunder which was further off over the hills. And then one day the cavalry came by. Then stores in wagons, the thunder muttering further and further away. I saw farm-carts going down the road at X. And then one day all manner of horses and traps and laughing people, farmers and women and boys all going by to X. There was going to be a fair.

And far away the road was growing longer and longer amidst, as always, desolation and thunder. And one day far away from X the road grew very fine indeed. It was going proudly through a mighty city, sweeping in like a river; you would not think that it ever remembered duck-boards. There were great palaces there, with huge armorial eagles blazoned in stone, and all along each side of the road was a row of statues of kings. And going down the road towards the palace, past the statues of the kings, a tired procession was riding, full of the flags of the Allies. And I looked at the flags in my dream, out of national pride to see whether we led, or whether France or America. America went before us, but I could not see the Union Jack in the van nor the Tricolour either, nor the Stars and Stripes: Belgium led and then Serbia, they that had suffered most.

And before the flags, and before the generals, I saw marching along on foot the ghosts of the working party that were killed at X, gazing about them in admiration as they went, at the great city and at the palaces. And one man, wondering at the Sièges Allée, turned round to the Lance Corporal in charge of the party: “That is a fine road that we made, Frank,” he said.

An Imperial Monument

It is an early summer's morning: the dew is all over France: the train is going eastwards. They are quite slow, those troop trains, and there are few embankments or cuttings in those flat plains, so that you seem to be meandering along through the very life of the people. The roads come right down to the railways, and the sun is shining brightly over the farms and the people going to work along the roads, so that you can see their faces clearly as the slow train passes them by.

They are all women and boys that work on the farms; sometimes perhaps you see a very old man, but nearly always women and boys; they are out working early. They straighten up from their work as we go by and lift their hands to bless us.

We pass by long rows of the tall French poplars, their branches cut away all up the trunk, leaving only an odd round tuft at the top of the tree; but little branches are growing all up the trunk now, and the poplars are looking unkempt. It would be the young men who would cut the branches of the poplars. They would cut them for some useful thrifty purpose that I do not know; and then they would cut them because they were always cut that way, as long ago as the times of the old men's tales about France; but chiefly, I expect, because youth likes to climb difficult trees; that is why they are clipped so very high. And the trunks are all unkempt now.

We go on by many farms with their shapely red-roofed houses; they stand there, having the air of the homes of an ancient people; they would not be out of keeping with any romance that might come, or any romance that has come in the long story of France, and the girls of those red-roofed houses work all alone in the fields.

We pass by many willows and come to a great marsh. In a punt on some open water an old man is angling. We come to fields again, and then to a deep wood. France smiles about us in the open sunlight.

But towards evening we pass over the border of this pleasant country into a tragical land of destruction and gloom. It is not only that murder has walked here to and fro for years, until all the fields are ominous with it, but the very fields themselves have been mutilated until they are unlike fields, the woods have been shattered right down to the anemones, and the houses have been piled in heaps of rubbish, and the heaps of rubbish have been

scattered by shells. We see no more trees, no more houses, no more women, no cattle even now. We have come to the abomination of desolation. And over it broods, and will probably brood for ever, accursed by men and accursed by the very fields, the hyena-like memory of the Kaiser, who has whitened so many bones.

It may be some satisfaction to his selfishness to know that the monument to it cannot pass away, to know that the shell holes go too deep to be washed away by the healing rains of years, to know that the wasted German generations will not in centuries gather up what has been spilt on the Somme, or France recover in the sunshine of many summers from all the misery that his devilish folly has caused. It is likely to be to such as him a source of satisfaction, for the truly vain care only to be talked of in many mouths; they hysterically love to be thought of, and the notice of mankind is to them a mirror which reflects their futile postures. The admiration of fools they love, and the praise of a slavelike people, but they would sooner be hated by mankind than be ignored and forgotten as is their due. And the truly selfish care only for their imperial selves.

Let us leave him to pass in thought from ruin to ruin, from wasted field to field, from crater to crater; let us leave his fancy haunting cemeteries in the stricken lands of the world, to find what glee he can in this huge manifestation of his imperial will.

We neither know to what punishment he moves nor can even guess what fitting one is decreed. But the time is surely appointed and the place. Poor trifler with Destiny, who ever had so much to dread?

A Walk to the Trenches

To stand at the beginning of a road is always wonderful; for on all roads before they end experience lies, sometimes adventure. And a trench, even as a road, has its beginnings somewhere. In the heart of a very strange country you find them suddenly. A trench may begin in the ruins of a house, may run up out of a ditch; may be cut into a rise of ground sheltered under a hill, and is built in many ways by many men. As to who is the best builder of trenches there can be little doubt, and any British soldier would probably admit that for painstaking work and excellence of construction there are few to rival Von Hindenburg. His Hindenburg line is a model of neatness and comfort, and it would be only a very ungrateful British soldier who would deny it.

You come to the trenches out of strangely wasted lands, you come perhaps to a wood in an agony of contortions, black, branchless, sepulchral trees, and then no more trees at all. The country after that is still called Picardy or Belgium, still has its old name on the map as though it smiled there yet, sheltering cities and hamlet and radiant with orchards and gardens, but the country named Belgium — or whatever it be — is all gone away, and there stretches for miles instead one of the world's great deserts, a thing to take its place no longer with smiling lands, but with Sahara, Gobi, Kalahari, and the Karoo; not to be thought of as Picardy, but more suitably to be named the Desert of Wilhelm. Through these sad lands one goes to come to the trenches. Overhead floats until it is chased away an aëroplane with little black crosses, that you can scarcely see at his respectful height, peering to see what more harm may be done in the desolation and ruin. Little flashes sparkle near him, white puffs spread out round the flashes: and he goes, and our airmen go away after him; black puffs break out round our airmen. Up in the sky you hear a faint tap-tapping. They have got their machine guns working.

You see many things there that are unusual in deserts: a good road, a railway, perhaps a motor bus; you see what was obviously once a village, and hear English songs, but no one who has not seen it can imagine the country in which the trenches lie, unless he bear a desert clearly in mind, a desert that has moved from its place on the map by some enchantment of

wizardry, and come down on a smiling country. Would it not be glorious to be a Kaiser and be able to do things like that?

Past all manner of men, past no trees, no hedges, no fields, but only one field from skyline to skyline that has been harrowed by war, one goes with companions that this event in our history has drawn from all parts of the earth. On that road you may hear all in one walk where is the best place to get lunch in the City; you may hear how they laid a drag for some Irish pack, and what the Master said; you may hear a farmer lamenting over the harm that rhinoceroses do to his coffee crop; you may hear Shakespeare quoted and La vie Parisienne.

In the village you see a lot of German orders, with their silly notes of exclamation after them, written up on notice boards among the ruins. Ruins and German orders. That turning movement of Von Kluck's near Paris in 1914 was a mistake. Had he not done it we might have had ruins and German orders everywhere. And yet Von Kluck may comfort himself with the thought that it is not by his mistakes that Destiny shapes the world: such a nightmare as a world-wide German domination can have had no place amongst the scheme of things.

Beyond the village the batteries are thick. A great howitzer near the road lifts its huge muzzle slowly, fires and goes down again, and lifts again and fires. It is as though Polyphemus had lifted his huge shape slowly, leisurely, from the hillside where he was sitting, and hurled the mountain top, and sat down again. If he is firing pretty regularly you are sure to get the blast of one of them as you go by, and it can be a very strong wind indeed. One's horse, if one is riding, does not very much like it, but I have seen horses far more frightened by a puddle on the road when coming home from hunting in the evening: one 12-inch howitzer more or less in France calls for no great attention from man or beast.

And so we come in sight of the support trenches where we are to dwell for a week before we go on for another mile over the hills, where the black fountains are rising.

A Walk in Picardy

Picture any village you know. In such a village as that the trench begins. That is to say, there are duck-boards along a ditch, and the ditch runs into a trench. Only the village is no longer there. It was like some village you know, though perhaps a little merrier, because it was further south and nearer the sun; but it is all gone now. And the trench runs out of the ruins, and is called Windmill Avenue. There must have been a windmill standing there once.

When you come from the ditch to the trench you leave the weeds and soil and trunks of willows and see the bare chalk. At the top of those two white walls is a foot or so of brown clay. The brown clay grows deeper as you come to the hills, until the chalk has disappeared altogether. Our alliance with France is new in the history of man, but it is an old, old union in the history of the hills. White chalk with brown clay on top has dipped and gone under the sea; and the hills of Sussex and Kent are one with the hills of Picardy.

And so you may pass through the chalk that lies in that desolate lane with memories of more silent and happier hills; it all depends on what the chalk means to you: you may be unfamiliar with it and in that case you will not notice it; or you may have been born among those thyme-scented hills and yet have no errant fancies, so that you will not think of the hills that watched you as a child, but only keep your mind on the business in hand; that is probably best.

You come after a while to other trenches: notice boards guide you, and you keep to Windmill Avenue. You go by Pear Lane, Cherry Lane, and Plum Lane. Pear trees, cherry trees and plum trees must have grown there. You are passing through either wild lanes banked with briar, over which these various trees peered one by one and showered their blossoms down at the end of spring, and girls would have gathered the fruit when it ripened, with the help of tall young men; or else you are passing through an old walled garden, and the pear and the cherry and plum were growing against the wall, looking southwards all through the summer. There is no way whatever of telling which it was; it is all one in war; whatever was there is gone; there remain to-day, and survive, the names of those three trees only. We come next to Apple Lane. You must not think that an apple tree ever

grew there, for we trace here the hand of the wit, who by naming Plum Lane's neighbour "Apple Lane" merely commemorates the inseparable connection that plum has with apple forever in the minds of all who go to modern war. For by mixing apple with plum the manufacturer sees the opportunity of concealing more turnip in the jam, as it were, at the junction of the two forces, than he might be able to do without this unholy alliance.

We come presently to the dens of those who trouble us (but only for our own good), the dugouts of the trench mortar batteries. It is noisy when they push up close to the front line and play for half an hour or so with their rivals: the enemy sends stuff back, our artillery join in; it is as though, while you were playing a game of croquet, giants hundreds of feet high, some of them friendly, some unfriendly, carnivorous and hungry, came and played football on your croquet lawn.

We go on past Battalion Headquarters, and past the dugouts and shelters of various people having business with History, past stores of bombs and the many other ingredients with which history is made, past men coming down who are very hard to pass, for the width of two men and two packs is the width of a communication trench and sometimes an inch over; past two men carrying a flying pig slung on a pole between them; by many turnings; and Windmill Avenue brings you at last to Company Headquarters in a dugout that Hindenburg made with his German thoroughness.

And there, after a while, descends the Tok Emma man, the officer commanding a trench mortar battery, and is given perchance a whiskey and water, and sits on the best empty box that we have to offer, and lights one of our cigarettes.

"There's going to be a bit of a strafe at 5.30," he says.

What Happened on the Night of the Twenty-Seventh

The night of the twenty-seventh was Dick Cheeser's first night on sentry. The night was far gone when he went on duty; in another hour they would stand to. Dick Cheeser had camouflaged his age when he enlisted: he was barely eighteen. A wonderfully short time ago he was quite a little boy; now he was in a frontline trench. It hadn't seemed that things were going to alter like that. Dick Cheeser was a plowboy: long brown furrows over haughty, magnificent downs seemed to stretch away into the future as far as his mind could see. No narrow outlook either, for the life of nations depends upon those brown furrows. But there are the bigger furrows that Mars makes, the long brown trenches of war; the life of nations depends on these too; Dick Cheeser had never pictured these. He had heard talk about a big navy and a lot of Dreadnoughts; silly nonsense he called it. What did one want a big navy for? To keep the Germans out, some people said. But the Germans weren't coming. If they wanted to come, why didn't they come? Anybody could see that they never did come. Some of Dick Cheeser's pals had votes.

And so he had never pictured any change from plowing the great downs; and here was war at last, and here was he. The Corporal showed him where to stand, told him to keep a good lookout and left him.

And there was Dick Cheeser alone in the dark with an army in front of him, eighty yards away: and, if all tales were true, a pretty horrible army.

The night was awfully still. I use the adverb not as Dick Cheeser would have used it. The stillness awed him. There had not been a shell all night. He put his head up over the parapet and waited. Nobody fired at him. He felt that the night was waiting for him. He heard voices going along the trench: some one said it was a black night: the voices died away. A mere phrase; the night wasn't black at all, it was grey. Dick Cheeser was staring at it, and the night was staring back at him, and seemed to be threatening him; it was grey, grey as an old cat that they used to have at home, and as artful. Yes, thought Dick Cheeser, it was an artful night; that was what was wrong with it. If shells had come or the Germans, or anything at all, you would know how to take it; but that quiet mist over huge valleys, and stillness! Anything might happen. Dick waited and waited, and the night waited too. He felt they were watching each other, the night and he. He felt that each was crouching. His mind slipped back to the woods on hills he

knew. He was watching with eyes and ears and imagination to see what would happen in No Man's Land under that ominous mist: but his mind took a peep for all that at the old woods that he knew. He pictured himself, he and a band of boys, chasing squirrels again in the summer. They used to chase a squirrel from tree to tree, throwing stones, till they tired it: and then they might hit it with a stone: usually not. Sometimes the squirrel would hide, and a boy would have to climb after it. It was great sport, thought Dick Cheeser. What a pity he hadn't had a catapult in those days, he thought. Somehow the years when he had not had a catapult seemed all to be wasted years. With a catapult one might get the squirrel almost at once, with luck: and what a great thing that would be. All the other boys would come round to look at the squirrel, and to look at the catapult, and ask him how he did it. He wouldn't have to say much, there would be the squirrel; no boasting would be necessary with the squirrel lying dead. It might spread to other things, even rabbits; almost anything, in fact. He would certainly get a catapult first thing when he got home. A little wind blew in the night, too cold for summer. It blew away, as it were, the summer of Dick's memories; blew away hills and woods and squirrel. It made for a moment a lane in the mist over No Man's Land. Dick Cheeser peered down it, but it closed again. "No," Night seemed to say, "you don't guess my secret." And the awful hush intensified. "What would they do?" thought the sentry. "What were they planning in all those miles of silence?" Even the Verys were few. When one went up, far hills seemed to sit and brood over the valley: their black shapes seemed to know what would happen in the mist and seemed sworn not to say. The rocket faded, and the hills went back into mystery again, and Dick Cheeser peered level again over the ominous valley.

All the dangers and sinister shapes and evil destinies, lurking between the armies in that mist, that the sentry faced that night cannot be told until the history of the war is written by a historian who can see the mind of the soldier. Not a shell fell all night, no German stirred; Dick Cheeser was relieved at "Stand to" and his comrades stood to beside him, and soon it was wide, golden, welcome dawn.

And for all the threats of night the thing that happened was one that the lonely sentry had never foreseen: in the hour of his watching Dick Cheeser, though scarcely eighteen, became a full-grown man.

Standing To

One cannot say that one time in the trenches is any more tense than another. One cannot take any one particular hour and call it, in modern nonsensical talk, "typical hour in the trenches." The routine of the trenches has gone on too long for that. The tensest hour ought to be half an hour before dawn, the hour when attacks are expected and men stand to. It is an old convention of war that that is the dangerous hour, the hour when defenders are weakest and attack most to be feared. For darkness favours the attackers then as night favours the lion, and then dawn comes and they can hold their gains in the light. Therefore in every trench in every war the garrison is prepared in that menacing hour, watching in greater numbers than they do the whole night through. As the first lark lifts from meadows they stand there in the dark. Whenever there is any war in any part of the world you may be sure that at that hour men crowd to their parapets: when sleep is deepest in cities they are watching there.

When the dawn shimmers a little, and a grey light comes, and widens, and all of a sudden figures become distinct, and the hour of the attack that is always expected is gone, then perhaps some faint feeling of gladness stirs the newest of the recruits; but chiefly the hour passes like all the other hours there, an unnoticed fragment of the long, long routine that is taken with resignation mingled with jokes.

Dawn comes shy with a wind scarce felt, dawn faint and strangely perceptible, feeble and faint in the east while men still watch the darkness. When did the darkness go? When did the dawn grow golden? It happened as in a moment, a moment you did not see. Guns flash no longer: the sky is gold and serene; dawn stands there like Victory that will shine, on one of these years when the Kaiser goes the way of the older curses of earth. Dawn, and the men unfix bayonets as they step down from the fire-step and clean their rifles with pull-throughs. Not all together, but section by section, for it would not do for a whole company to be caught cleaning their rifles at dawn, or at any other time.

They rub off the mud or the rain that has come at night on their rifles, they detach the magazine and see that its spring is working, they take out the breechblock and oil it, and put back everything clean: and another night is gone; it is one day nearer victory.

The Splendid Traveller

A traveller threw his cloak over his shoulder and came down slopes of gold in El Dorado. From incredible heights he came. He came from where the peaks of the pure gold mountain shone a little red with the sunset; from crag to crag of gold he stepped down slowly. Sheer out of romance he came through the golden evening.

It was only an incident of every day; the sun had set or was setting, the air turned chill, and a battalion's bugles were playing "Retreat" when this knightly stranger, a British aëroplane, dipped, and went homeward over the infantry. That beautiful evening call, and the golden cloud bank towering, and that adventurer coming home in the cold, happening all together, revealed in a flash the fact (which hours of thinking sometimes will not bring) that we live in such a period of romance as the troubadours would have envied.

He came, that British airman, over the border, sheer over No Man's Land and the heads of the enemy and the mysterious land behind, snatching the secrets that the enemy would conceal. Either he had defeated the German airmen who would have stopped his going, or they had not dared to try. Who knows what he had done? He had been abroad and was coming home in the evening, as he did every day.

Even when all its romance has been sifted from an age (as the centuries sift) and set apart from the trivial, and when all has been stored by the poets; even then what has any of them more romantic than these adventurers in the evening air, coming home in the twilight with the black shells bursting below?

The infantry look up with the same vague wonder with which children look at dragon flies; sometimes they do not look at all, for all that comes in France has its part with the wonder of a terrible story as well as with the incidents of the day, incidents that recur year in and year out, too often for us to notice them. If a part of the moon were to fall off in the sky and come tumbling to earth, the comment on the lips of the imperturbable British watchers that have seen so much would be, "Hullo, what is Jerry up to now?"

And so the British aëroplane glides home in the evening, and the light fades from the air, and what is left of the poplars grows dark against the sky,

and what is left of the houses grows more mournful in the gloaming, and night comes, and with it the sounds of thunder, for the airman has given his message to the artillery. It is as though Hermes had gone abroad sailing upon his sandals, and had found some bad land below those winged feet wherein men did evil and kept not the laws of gods or men; and he had brought this message back and the gods were angry.

For the wars we fight to-day are not like other wars, and the wonders of them are unlike other wonders. If we do not see in them the saga and epic, how shall we tell of them?

England

"And then we used to have sausages," said the Sergeant.

"And mashed?" said the Private.

"Yes," said the Sergeant, "and beer. And then we used to go home. It was grand in the evenings. We used to go along a lane that was full of them wild roses. And then we come to the road where the houses were. They all had their bit of a garden, every house."

"Nice, I calls it, a garden," the Private said.

"Yes," said the Sergeant, "they all had their garden. It came right down to the road. Wooden palings: none of that there wire."

"I hates wire," said the Private.

"They didn't have none of it," the N. C. O. went on. "The gardens came right down to the road, looking lovely. Old Billy Weeks he had them tall pale-blue flowers in his garden nearly as high as a man."

"Hollyhocks?" said the Private.

"No, they wasn't hollyhocks. Lovely they were. We used to stop and look at them, going by every evening. He had a path up the middle of his garden paved with red tiles, Billy Weeks had; and these tall blue flowers growing the whole way along it, both sides like. They was a wonder. Twenty gardens there must have been, counting them all; but none to touch Billy Weeks with his pale-blue flowers. There was an old windmill away to the left. Then there were the swifts sailing by overhead and screeching: just about as high again as the houses. Lord, how them birds did fly. And there was the other young fellows, what were not out walking, standing about by the roadside, just doing nothing at all. One of them had a flute: Jim Booker, he was. Those were great days. The bats used to come out, flutter, flutter, flutter; and then there'd be a star or two; and the smoke from the chimneys going all grey; and a little cold wind going up and down like the bats; and

all the colour going out of things; and the woods looking all strange, and a wonderful quiet in them, and a mist coming up from the stream. It's a queer time that. It's always about that time, the way I see it: the end of the evening in the long days, and a star or two, and me and my girl going home.

"Wouldn't you like to talk about things for a bit the way you remember them?"

"Oh, no, Sergeant," said the other, "you go on. You do bring it all back so."

"I used to bring her home," the Sergeant said, "to her father's house. Her father was keeper there, and they had a house in the wood. A fine house with queer old tiles on it, and a lot of large friendly dogs. I knew them all by name, same as they knew me. I used to walk home then along the side of the wood. The owls would be about; you could hear them yelling. They'd float out of the wood like, sometimes: all large and white."

"I knows them," said the Private.

"I saw a fox once so close I could nearly touch him, walking like he was on velvet. He just slipped out of the wood."

"Cunning old brute," said the Private.

"That's the time to be out," said the Sergeant. "Ten o'clock on a summer's night, and the night full of noises, not many of them, but what there is, strange, and coming from a great way off, through the quiet, with nothing to stop them. Dogs barking, owls hooting, an old cart; and then just once a sound that you couldn't account for at all, not anyhow. I've heard sounds on nights like that that nobody 'ud think you'd heard, nothing like the flute that young Booker had, nothing like anything on earth."

"I know," said the Private.

"I never told any one before, because they wouldn't believe you. But it doesn't matter now. There'd be a light in the window to guide me when I got home. I'd walk up through the flowers of our garden. We had a lovely garden. Wonderful white and strange the flowers looked of a nighttime."

"You bring it all back wonderful," said the Private.

"It's a great thing to have lived," said the Sergeant.

"Yes, Sergeant," said the other, "I wouldn't have missed it, not for anything."

For five days the barrage had rained down behind them: they were utterly cut off and had no hope of rescue: their food was done, and they did not know where they were.

Shells

When the aëroplanes are home and the sunset has flared away, and it is cold, and night comes down over France, you notice the guns more than you do by day, or else they are actually more active then, I do not know which it is.

It is then as though a herd of giants, things of enormous height, came out from lairs in the earth and began to play with the hills. It is as though they picked up the tops of the hills in their hands and then let them drop rather slowly. It is exactly like hills falling. You see the flashes all along the sky, and then that lumping thump as though the top of the hill had been let drop, not all in one piece, but crumbled a little as it would drop from your hands if you were three hundred feet high and were fooling about in the night, spoiling what it had taken so long to make. That is heavy stuff bursting, a little way off.

If you are anywhere near a shell that is bursting, you can hear in it a curious metallic ring. That applies to the shells of either side, provided that you are near enough, though usually of course it is the hostile shell and not your own that you are nearest to, and so one distinguishes them. It is curious, after such a colossal event as this explosion must be in the life of a bar of steel, that anything should remain at all of the old bell-like voice of the metal, but it appears to, if you listen attentively; it is perhaps its last remonstrance before leaving its shape and going back to rust in the earth again for ages.

Another of the voices of the night is the whine the shell makes in coming; it is not unlike the cry the hyena utters as soon as it's dark in Africa: "How nice traveller would taste," the hyena seems to say, and "I want dead White Man." It is the rising note of the shell as it comes nearer, and its dying away when it has gone over, that make it reminiscent of the hyena's method of diction. If it is not going over then it has something quite different to say. It begins the same as the other, it comes up, talking of the back areas with the same long whine as the other. I have heard old hands say "That one is going well over." "Whee-oo," says the shell; but just where the "oo" should be long drawn out and turn into the hyena's final syllable, it says something quite different. "Zarp," it says. That is bad. Those are the shells that are looking for you.

And then of course there is the whizz-bang coming from close, along his flat trajectory: he has little to say, but comes like a sudden wind, and all that he has to do is done and over at once.

And then there is the gas shell, who goes over gurgling gluttonously, probably in big herds, putting down a barrage. It is the liquid inside that gurgles before it is turned to gas by the mild explosion; that is the explanation of it; yet that does not prevent one picturing a tribe of cannibals who have winded some nice juicy men and are smacking their chops and dribbling in anticipation.

And a wonderful thing to see, even in those wonderful nights, is our thermite bursting over the heads of the Germans. The shell breaks into a shower of golden rain; one cannot judge easily at night how high from the ground it breaks, but about as high as the tops of trees seen at a hundred yards. It spreads out evenly all round and rains down slowly; it is a bad shower to be out in, and for a long time after it has fallen, the sodden grass of winter, and the mud and old bones beneath it, burn quietly in a circle. On such a night as this, and in such showers, the flying pigs will go over, which take two men to carry each of them; they go over and root right down to the German dugout, where the German has come in out of the golden rain, and they fling it all up in the air.

These are such nights as Scheherazade with all her versatility never dreamed of; or if such nightmares came she certainly never told of them, or her august master, the Sultan, light of the age, would have had her at once beheaded; and his people would have deemed that he did well. It has been reserved for a modern autocrat to dream such a nightmare, driven to it perhaps by the tales of a white-whiskered Scheherazade, the Lord of the Kiel Canal; and being an autocrat he has made the nightmare a reality for the world. But the nightmare is stronger than its master, and grows mightier every night; and the All-Highest War Lord learns that there are powers in Hell that are easily summoned by the rulers of earth, but that go not easily home.

Two Degrees of Envy

It was night in the front line and no moon, or the moon was hidden. There was a strafe going on. The Tok Emmas were angry. And the artillery on both sides were looking for the Tok Emmas.

Tok Emma, I may explain for the blessed dwellers in whatever far happy island there be that has not heard of these things, is the crude language of Mars. He has not time to speak of a trunk mortar battery, for he is always in a hurry, and so he calls them T. M.'s. But Bellona might not hear him saying T. M., for all the din that she makes: might think that he said D. N; and so he calls it Tok Emma. Ak, Beer, C, Don: this is the alphabet of Mars.

And the huge minnies were throwing old limbs out of No Man's Land into the frontline trench, and shells were rasping down through the air that seemed to resist them until it was torn to pieces: they burst and showers of mud came down from heaven. Aimlessly, as it seemed, shells were bursting now and then in the air, with a flash intensely red: the smell of them was drifting down the trenches.

In the middle of all this Bert Butterworth was hit. "Only in the foot," his pals said. "Only!" said Bert. They put him on a stretcher and carried him down the trench. They passed Bill Britterling, standing in the mud, an old friend of Bert's. Bert's face, twisted with pain, looked up to Bill for some sympathy.

"Lucky devil," said Bill.

Across the way on the other side of No Man's Land there was mud the same as on Bill's side: only the mud over there stank; it didn't seem to have been kept clean somehow. And the parapet was sliding away in places, for working parties had not had much of a chance. They had three Tok Emmas working in that battalion front line, and the British batteries did not quite know where they were, and there were eight of them looking.

Fritz Groedenschasser, standing in that unseemly mud, greatly yearned for them to find soon what they were looking for. Eight batteries searching for something they can't find, along a trench in which you have to be, leaves the elephant hunter's most desperate tale a little dull and insipid. Not that Fritz Groedenschasser knew anything about elephant hunting: he hated all things sporting, and cordially approved of the execution of Nurse Cavell. And there was thermite too. Flammenwerfer was all very well, a good

German weapon: it could burn a man alive at twenty yards. But this accursed flaming English thermite could catch you at four miles. It wasn't fair.

The three German trench mortars were all still firing. When would the English batteries find what they were looking for, and this awful thing stop? The night was cold and smelly.

Fritz shifted his feet in the foul mud, but no warmth came to him that way.

A gust of shells was coming along the trench. Still they had not found the minnewerfer! Fritz moved from his place altogether to see if he could find some place where the parapet was not broken. And as he moved along the sewerlike trench he came on a wooden cross that marked the grave of a man he once had known, now buried some days in the parapet, old Ritz Handelscheiner.

"Lucky devil," said Fritz.

The Master of No Man's Land

When the last dynasty has fallen and the last empire passed away, when man himself has gone, there will probably still remain the swede. [The rutabaga or Swedish turnip.]

There grew a swede in No Man's Land by Croisille near the Somme, and it had grown there for a long while free from man.

It grew as you never saw a swede grow before. It grew tall and strong and weedy. It lifted its green head and gazed round over No Man's Land. Yes, man was gone, and it was the day of the swede.

The storms were tremendous. Sometimes pieces of iron sang through its leaves. But man was gone and it was the day of the swede.

A man used to come there once, a great French farmer, an oppressor of swedes. Legends were told of him and his herd of cattle, dark traditions that passed down vegetable generations. It was somehow known in those fields that the man ate swedes.

And now his house was gone and he would come no more.

The storms were terrible, but they were better than man. The swede nodded to his companions: the years of freedom had come.

They had always known among them that these years would come. Man had not been there always, but there had always been swedes. He would go some day, suddenly, as he came. That was the faith of the swedes. And when the trees went the swede believed that the day was come. When hundreds of little weeds arrived that were never allowed before, and grew unchecked, he knew it.

After that he grew without any care, in sunlight, moonlight and rain; grew abundantly and luxuriantly in the freedom, and increased in arrogance till he felt himself greater than man. And indeed in those leaden storms that sang often over his foliage all living things seemed equal.

There was little that the Germans left when they retreated from the Somme that was higher than this swede. He grew the tallest thing for miles and miles. He dominated the waste. Two cats slunk by him from a shattered farm: he towered above them contemptuously.

A partridge ran by him once, far, far below his lofty leaves. The night winds mourning in No Man's Land seemed to sing for him alone.

It was surely the hour of the swede. For him, it seemed, was No Man's Land. And there I met him one night by the light of a German rocket and brought him back to our company to cook.

Weeds and Wire

Things had been happening. Divisions were moving. There had been, there was going to be, a stunt. A battalion marched over the hill and sat down by the road. They had left the trenches three days march to the north and had come to a new country. The officers pulled their maps out; a mild breeze fluttered them; yesterday had been winter and to-day was spring; but spring in a desolation so complete and far-reaching that you only knew of it by that little wind. It was early March by the calendar, but the wind was blowing out of the gates of April. A platoon commander, feeling that mild wind blowing, forgot his map and began to whistle a tune that suddenly came to him out of the past with the wind. Out of the past it blew and out of the South, a merry vernal tune of a Southern people. Perhaps only one of those that noticed the tune had ever heard it before. An officer sitting near had heard it sung; it reminded him of a holiday long ago in the South.

"Where did you hear that tune?" he asked the platoon commander.

"Oh, the hell of a long way from here," the platoon commander said.

He did not remember quite where it was he had heard it, but he remembered a sunny day in France and a hill all dark with pine woods, and a man coming down at evening out of the woods, and down the slope to the village, singing this song. Between the village and the slope there were orchards in blossom. So that he came with his song for hundreds of yards through orchards. "The hell of a way from here," he said.

For a long while then they sat silent.

"It mightn't have been so very far from here," said the platoon commander. "It was in France, now I come to think of it. But it was a lovely part of France, all woods and orchards. Nothing like this, thank God." And he glanced with a tired look at the unutterable desolation.

"Where was it?" said the other.

"In Picardy," he said.

"Aren't we in Picardy now?" said his friend.

"Are we?" he said.

"I don't know. The maps don't call it Picardy."

"It was a fine place, anyway," the platoon commander said. "There seemed always to be a wonderful light on the hills. A kind of short grass

grew on them, and it shone in the sun at evening. There were black woods above them. A man used to come out of them singing at evening."

He looked wearily round at the brown desolation of weeds. As far as the two officers could see there was nothing but brown weeds and bits of brown barbed wire. He turned from the desolate scene back to his reminiscences.

"He came singing through the orchards into the village," he said. "A quaint old place with queer gables, called Ville-en-Bois."

"Do you know where we are?" said the other.

"No, said the platoon commander."

"I thought not," he said. "Hadn't you better take a look at the map?"

"I suppose so," said the platoon commander, and he smoothed out his map and wearily got to the business of finding out where he was.

"Good Lord!" he said. "Ville-en-Bois!"

Spring in England and Flanders

Very soon the earliest primroses will be coming out in woods wherever they have been sheltered from the north. They will grow bolder as the days go by, and spread and come all down the slopes of sunny hills. Then the anemones will come, like a shy pale people, one of the tribes of the elves, who dare not leave the innermost deeps of the wood: in those days all the trees will be in leaf, the bluebells will follow, and certain fortunate woods will shelter such myriads of them that the bright fresh green of the beech trees will flash between two blues, the blue of the sky and the deeper blue of the bluebells. Later the violets come, and such a time as this is the perfect time to see England: when the cuckoo is heard and he surprises his hearers; when evenings are lengthening out and the bat is abroad again; and all the flowers are out and all the birds sing. At such a time not only Nature smiles but our quiet villages and grave old spires wake up from winter in the mellow air and wear their centuries lightly. At such a time you might come just at evening on one of those old villages in a valley and find it in the mood to tell you the secret of the ages that it hid and treasured there before the Normans came. Who knows? For they are very old, very wise, very friendly; they might speak to you one warm evening. If you went to them after great suffering they might speak to you; after nights and nights of shelling over in France, they might speak to you and you might hear them clearly.

It would be a long, long story that they would tell, all about the ages; and it would vary wonderfully little, much less perhaps than we think; and the repetitions rambling on and on in the evening, as the old belfry spoke and the cottages gathered below it, might sound so soothing after the boom of shells that perhaps you would nearly sleep. And then with one's memory tired out by the war one might never remember the long story they told, when the belfry and the brown-roofed houses all murmured at evening, might never remember even that they had spoken all through that warm spring and evening. We may have heard them speak and forgotten that they have spoken. Who knows? We are at war, and see so many strange things: some we must forget, some we must remember; and we cannot choose which.

To turn from Kent to Flanders is to turn to a time of mourning through all seasons alike. Spring there brings out no leaf on myriad oaks, nor the haze of green that floats like a halo above the heads of the birch trees, that stand with their fairylike trunks haunting the deeps of the woods. For miles and miles and miles summer ripens no crops, leads out no maidens laughing in the moonlight, and brings no harvest home. When Autumn looks on orchards in all that region of mourning he looks upon barren trees that will never blossom again. Winter drives in no sturdy farmers at evening to sit before cheery fires, families meet not at Christmas, and the bells are dumb in belfries; for all by which a man might remember his home has been utterly swept away: has been swept away to make a maniacal dancing ground on which a murderous people dance to their death led by a shallow, clever, callous, imperial clown.

There they dance to their doom till their feet shall find the precipice that was prepared for them on the day that they planned the evil things they have done.

The Nightmare Countries

There are certain lands in the darker dreams of poetry that stand out in the memory of generations. There is for instance Poe's "Dark tarn of Auber, the ghoul-haunted region of Weir"; there are some queer twists in the river Alph as imagined by Coleridge; two lines of Swinburne:

By the tideless dolorous inland sea
In a land of sand and ruin and gold

are as haunting as any. There are in literature certain regions of gloom, so splendid that whenever you come on them they leave in the mind a sort of nightmare country which one's thoughts revisit on hearing the lines quoted.

It is pleasant to picture such countries sometimes when sitting before the fire. It is pleasant because you can banish them by the closing of a book; a puff of smoke from a pipe will hide them altogether, and back come the pleasant, wholesome, familiar things. But in France they are there always. In France the nightmare countries stand all night in the starlight; dawn comes and they still are there. The dead are buried out of sight and others take their places among men; but the lost lands lie unburied gazing up at the winds; and the lost woods stand like skeletons all grotesque in the solitude; the very seasons have fled from them. The very seasons have fled; so that if you look up to see whether summer has turned to autumn, or if autumn has turned to winter yet, nothing remains to show you. It is like the eccentric dream of some strange man, very arresting and mysterious, but lacking certain things that should be there before you can recognize it as earthly. It is a mad, mad landscape. There are miles and miles and miles of it. It is the biggest thing man has done. It looks as though man in his pride, with all his clever inventions, had made for himself a sorry attempt at creation.

Indeed when we trace it all back to its origin we find at the beginning of this unhappy story a man who was only an emperor and wished to be something more. He would have ruled the world but has only meddled with it; and his folly has brought misery to millions, and there lies his broken dream on the broken earth. He will never take Paris now. He will never be crowned at Versailles as Emperor of Europe; and after that, most secret dream of all, did not the Cæsars proclaim themselves divine? Was it not

whispered among Macedonian courtiers that Alexander was the child of God? And was the Hohenzollern less than these?

What might not force accomplish? All gone now, that dream and the Hohenzollern line broken. A maniacal dream and broken farms all mixed up together: they make a pretty nightmare and the clouds still gleam at night with the flashes of shells, and the sky is still troubled by day with uncouth balloons and the black bursts of the German shells and the white of our anti-aircraft.

And below there lies this wonderful waste land where no girls sing, and where no birds come but starlings; where no hedgerows stand, and no lanes with wild roses, and where no pathways run through fields of wheat, and there are no fields at all and no farms and no farmers; and two haystacks stand on a hill I know, undestroyed in the desolation, and nobody touches them for they know the Germans too well; and the tops have been blown off hills down to the chalk. And men say of this place that it is Pozières and of that place that it is Ginchy; nothing remains to show that hamlets stood there at all, and a brown, brown weed grows over it all for ever; and a mighty spirit has arisen in man, and no one bows to the War Lord though many die. And Liberty is she who sang her songs of old, and is fair as she ever was, when men see her in visions, at night in No Man's Land when they have the strength to crawl in: still she walks of a night in Pozières and in Ginchy.

A fanciful man once called himself the Emperor of the Sahara: the German Kaiser has stolen into a fair land and holds with weakening hands a land of craters and weed, and wire and wild cabbages and old German bones.

Spring and the Kaiser

While all the world is waiting for Spring there lie great spaces in one of the pleasantest lands to which Spring cannot come.

Pear trees and cherry and orchards flash over other lands, blossoming as abundantly as though their wonder were new, with a beauty as fresh and surprising as though nothing like it before had ever adorned countless centuries. Now with the larch and soon with the beech trees and hazel, a bright green blazes forth to illumine the year. The slopes are covered with violets. Those who have gardens are beginning to be proud of them and to point them out to their neighbours. Almond and peach in blossom peep over old brick walls. The land dreams of summer all in the youth of the year.

But better than all this the Germans have found war. The simple content of a people at peace in pleasant countries counted for nothing with them. Their Kaiser prepared for war, made speeches about war, and, when he was ready, made war. And now the hills that should be covered with violets are full of murderous holes, and the holes are half full of empty meat tins, and the garden walls have gone and the gardens with them, and there are no woods left to shelter anemones. Boundless masses of brown barbed wire straggle over the landscape. All the orchards there are cut down out of ruthless spite to hurt France whom they cannot conquer. All the little trees that grow near gardens are gone, aspen, laburnum and lilac. It is like this for hundreds of miles. Hundreds of ruined towns gaze at it with vacant windows and see a land from which even Spring is banished. And not a ruined house in all the hundred towns but mourns for some one, man, woman or child; for the Germans make war equally on all in the land where Spring comes no more.

Some day Spring will come back; some day she will shine all April in Picardy again, for Nature is never driven utterly forth, but comes back with her seasons to cover up even the vilest things.

She shall hide the raw earth of the shell holes till the violets come again; she shall bring back even the orchards for Spring to walk in once more; the woods will grow tall again above the southern anemones; and the great abandoned guns of the Germans will rust by the rivers of France. Forgotten like them, the memory of the War Lord will pass with his evil deeds.

Two Songs

Over slopes of English hills looking south in the time of violets, evening was falling.

Shadows at edges of woods moved, and then merged in the gloaming.

The bat, like a shadow himself, finding that spring was come, slipped from the dark of the wood as far as a clump of beech trees and fluttered back again on his wonderful quiet wings.

Pairing pigeons were home.

Very young rabbits stole out to gaze at the calm still world. They came out as the stars come. At one time they were not there, and then you saw them, but you did not see them come.

Towering clouds to the west built palaces, cities and mountains; bastions of rose and precipices of gold; giants went home over them draped in mauve by steep rose-pink ravines into emerald-green empires. Turbulences of colour broke out above the departed sun; giants merged into mountains, and cities became seas, and new processions of other fantastic things sailed by. But the chalk slopes facing south smiled on with the same calm light, as though every blade of grass gathered a ray from the gloaming. All the hills faced the evening with that same quiet glow, which faded softly as the air grew colder; and the first star appeared.

Voices came up in the hush, clear from the valley, and ceased. A light was lit, like a spark, in a distant window: more stars appeared and the woods were all dark now, and shapes even on the hill slopes began to grow indistinct.

Home by a laneway in the dim, still evening a girl was going, singing the Marseillaise.

In France where the downs in the north roll away without hedges, as though they were great free giants that man had never confined, as though they were stretching their vast free limbs in the evening, the same light was smiling and glimmering softly away.

A road wound over the downs and away round one of their shoulders. A hush lay over them as though the giants slept, or as though they guarded in silence their ancient, wonderful history.

The stillness deepened and the dimness of twilight; and just before colours fade, while shapes can still be distinguished, there came by the road

a farmer leading his Norman horse. High over the horse's withers his collar pointed with brass made him fantastic and huge and strange to see in the evening.

They moved together through that mellow light towards where unseen among the clustered downs the old French farmer's house was sheltered away.

He was going home at evening humming "God Save the King."

The Punishment

An exhalation arose, drawn up by the moon, from an old battlefield after the passing of years. It came out of very old craters and gathered from trenches, smoked up from No Man's Land, and the ruins of farms; it rose from the rottenness of dead brigades, and lay for half the night over two armies; but at midnight the moon drew it up all into one phantom and it rose and trailed away eastwards.

It passed over men in grey that were weary of war; it passed over a land once prosperous, happy and mighty, in which were a people that were gradually starving; it passed by ancient belfries in which there were no bells now; it passed over fear and misery and weeping, and so came to the palace at Potsdam. It was the dead of the night between midnight and dawn, and the palace was very still that the Emperor might sleep, and sentries guarded it who made no noise and relieved others in silence. Yet it was not so easy to sleep. Picture to yourself a murderer who had killed a man. Would you sleep? Picture yourself the man that planned this war! Yes, you sleep, but nightmares come.

The phantom entered the chamber. "Come," it said.

The Kaiser leaped up at once as obediently as when he came to attention on parade, years ago, as a subaltern in the Prussian Guard, a man whom no woman or child as yet had ever cursed; he leaped up and followed. They passed the silent sentries; none challenged and none saluted; they were moving swiftly over the town as the felon Gothas go; they came to a cottage in the country. They drifted over a little garden gate, and there in a neat little garden the phantom halted like a wind that has suddenly ceased. "Look," it said.

Should he look? Yet he must look. The Kaiser looked; and saw a window shining and a neat room in the cottage: there was nothing dreadful there; thank the good German God for that; it was all right, after all. The Kaiser had had a fright, but it was all right; there was only a woman with a baby sitting before the fire, and two small children and a man. And it was quite a jolly room. And the man was a young soldier; and, why, he was a Prussian Guardsman, — there was his helmet hanging on the wall, — so everything was all right. They were jolly German children; that was well. How nice and homely the room was. There shone before him, and showed far off in

the night, the visible reward of German thrift and industry. It was all so tidy and neat, and yet they were quite poor people. The man had done his work for the Fatherland, and yet beyond all that had been able to afford all those little knickknacks that make a home so pleasant and that in their humble little way were luxury. And while the Kaiser looked the two young children laughed as they played on the floor, not seeing that face at the window.

Why! Look at the helmet. That was lucky. A bullet hole right through the front of it. That must have gone very close to the man's head. How ever did it get through? It must have glanced upwards as bullets sometimes do. The hole was quite low in the helmet. It would be dreadful to have bullets coming by close like that. The firelight flickered, and the lamp shone on, and the children played on the floor, and the man was smoking out of a china pipe; he was strong and able and young, one of the wealth-winners of Germany.

"Have you seen?" said the phantom.

"Yes," said the Kaiser. It was well, he thought, that a Kaiser should see how his people lived.

At once the fire went out and the lamp faded away, the room fell sombrely into neglect and squalor, and the soldier and the children faded away with the room; all disappeared phantasmally, and nothing remained but the helmet in a kind of glow on the wall, and the woman sitting all by herself in the darkness.

"It has all gone," said the Kaiser.

"It has never been," said the phantom.

The Kaiser looked again. Yes, there was nothing there, it was just a vision. There were the grey walls all damp and uncared for, and that helmet standing out solid and round, like the only real thing among fancies. No, it had never been. It was just a vision.

"It might have been," said the phantom.

Might have been? How might it have been?

"Come," said the phantom.

They drifted away down a little lane that in summer would have had roses, and came to an Uhlan's house; in times of peace a small farmer. Farm buildings in good repair showed even in the night, and the black shapes of haystacks; again a well-kept garden lay by the house. The phantom and the Kaiser stood in the garden; before them a window glowed in a lamplit room.

“Look,” said the phantom.

The Kaiser looked again and saw a young couple; the woman played with a baby, and all was prosperous in the merry room. Again the hard-won wealth of Germany shone out for all to see, the cosy comfortable furniture spoke of acres well cared for, spoke of victory in the struggle with the seasons on which wealth of nations depends.

“It might have been,” said the phantom. Again the fire died out and the merry scene faded away, leaving a melancholy, ill-kept room, with poverty and mourning haunting dusty corners and the woman sitting alone.

“Why do you show me this?” said the Kaiser. “Why do you show me these visions?”

“Come,” said the phantom.

“What is it?” said the Kaiser. “Where are you bringing me?”

“Come,” said the phantom.

They went from window to window, from land to land. You had seen, had you been out that night in Germany, and able to see visions, an imperious figure passing from place to place, looking on many scenes. He looked on them, and families withered away, and happy scenes faded, and the phantom said to him “Come.” He expostulated but obeyed; and so they went from window to window of hundreds of farms in Prussia, till they came to the Prussian border and went on into Saxony; and always you would have heard, could you hear spirits speak, “It might have been,” “It might have been,” repeated from window to window.

They went down through Saxony, heading for Austria. And for long the Kaiser kept that callous, imperious look. But at last he, even he, at last he nearly wept. And the phantom turned then and swept him back over Saxony, and into Prussia again and over the sentries’ heads, back to his comfortable bed where it was so hard to sleep.

And though they had seen thousands of merry homes, homes that can never be merry now, shrines of perpetual mourning; though they had seen thousands of smiling German children, who will never be born now, but were only the visions of hopes blasted by him; for all the leagues over which he had been so ruthlessly hurried, dawn was yet barely breaking.

He had looked on the first few thousand homes of which he had robbed all time, and which he must see with his eyes before he may go hence. The first night of the Kaiser’s punishment was accomplished.

The English Spirit

By the end of the South African war Sergeant Cane had got one thing very well fixed in his mind, and that was that war was an overrated amusement. He said he "was fed up with it," partly because that misused metaphor was then new, partly because every one was saying it: he felt it right down in his bones, and he had a long memory. So when wonderful rumours came to the East Anglian village where he lived, on August 1, 1914, Sergeant Cane said: "That means war," and decided then and there to have nothing to do with it: it was somebody else's turn; he felt he had done enough. Then came August 4th, and England true to her destiny, and then Lord Kitchener's appeal for men. Sergeant Cane had a family to look after and a nice little house: he had left the army ten years.

In the next week all the men went who had been in the army before, all that were young enough, and a good sprinkling of the young men too who had never been in the army. Men asked Cane if he was going, and he said straight out "No."

By the middle of August Cane was affecting the situation. He was a little rallying point for men who did not want to go. "He knows what it's like," they said.

In the smoking room of the Big House sat the Squire and his son, Arthur Smith; and Sir Munion Boomer-Platt, the Member for the division. The Squire's son had been in the last war as a boy, and like Sergeant Cane had left the army since. All the morning he had been cursing an imaginary general, seated in the War Office at an imaginary desk with Smith's own letter before him, in full view but unopened. Why on earth didn't he answer it, Smith thought. But he was calmer now, and the Squire and Sir Munion were talking of Sergeant Cane.

"Leave him to me," said Sir Munion.

"Very well," said the Squire. So Sir Munion Boomer-Platt went off and called on Sergeant Cane.

Mrs Cane knew what he had come for.

"Don't let him talk you over, Bill," she said.

"Not he," said Sergeant Cane.

Sir Munion came on Sergeant Cane in his garden.

“A fine day,” said Sir Munion. And from that he went on to the war. “If you enlist,” he said, “they will make you a sergeant again at once. You will get a sergeant’s pay, and your wife will get the new separation allowance.”

“Sooner have Cane,” said Mrs Cane.

“Yes, yes, of course,” said Sir Munion. “But then there is the medal, probably two or three medals, and the glory of it, and it is such a splendid life.”

Sir Munion did warm to a thing whenever he began to hear his own words. He painted war as it has always been painted, one of the most beautiful things you could imagine. And then it mustn’t be supposed that it was like those wars that there used to be, a long way off. There would be houses where you would be billeted, and good food, and shady trees and villages wherever you went. And it was such an opportunity of seeing the Continent (“the Continent as it really is,” Sir Munion called it) as would never come again, and he only wished he were younger. Sir Munion really did wish it, as he spoke, for his own words stirred him profoundly; but somehow or other they did not stir Sergeant Cane. No, he had done his share, and he had a family to look after.

Sir Munion could not understand him: he went back to the Big House and said so. He had told him all the advantages he could think of that were there to be had for the asking, and Sergeant Cane merely neglected them.

“Let me have a try,” said Arthur Smith. “He soldiered with me before.”

Sir Munion shrugged his shoulders. He had all the advantages at his fingers’ ends, from pay to billeting: there was nothing more to be said. Nevertheless young Smith went.

“Hullo, Sergeant Cane,” said Smith.

“Hello, sir,” said the sergeant.

“Do you remember that night at Reit River?”

“Don’t I, sir,” said Cane.

“One blanket each and no ground sheet?”

“I remember, sir,” said Cane.

“Didn’t it rain,” said Smith.

“It rained that night, proper.”

“Drowned a few of the lice, I suppose.”

“Not many,” said Cane.

“No, not many,” Smith reflected. “The Boers had the range all right that time.”

“Gave it us proper,” said Cane.

“We were hungry that night,” said Smith. “I could have eaten biltong.”

“I did eat some of it,” said Cane. “Not bad stuff, what there was of it, only not enough.”

“I don’t think,” said Smith, “that I’ve ever slept on the bare earth since.”

“No, sir?” said Cane. “It’s hard. You get used to it. But it will always be hard.”

“Yes, it will always be hard,” said Smith. “Do you remember the time we were thirsty?”

“Oh, yes, sir,” said Cane, “I remember that. One doesn’t forget that.”

“No. I still dream of it sometimes,” said Smith. “It makes a nasty dream. I wake with my mouth all dry too, when I dream that.”

“Yes,” said Cane, “one doesn’t forget being thirsty.”

“Well,” said Smith, “I suppose we’re for it all over again?”

“I suppose so, sir,” said Cane.

An Investigation Into the Causes and Origin of the War

The German imperial barber has been called up. He must have been called up quite early in the war. I have seen photographs in papers that leave no doubt of that. Who he is I do not know: I once read his name in an article but have forgotten it; few even know if he still lives. And yet what harm he has done! What vast evils he has unwittingly originated! Many years ago he invented a frivolity, a jeu d’esprit easily forgivable to an artist in the heyday of his youth, to whom his art was new and even perhaps wonderful. A craft, of course, rather than an art, and a humble craft at that; but then, the man was young, and what will not seem wonderful to youth?

He must have taken the craft very seriously, but as youth takes things seriously, fantastically and with laughter. He must have determined to outshine rivals: he must have gone away and thought, burning candles late perhaps, when all the palace was still. But how can youth think seriously? And there had come to him this absurd, this fantastical conceit. What else would have come? The more seriously he took the tonsorial art, the more he studied its tricks and phrases and heard old barbers lecture, the more sure were the imps of youth to prompt him to laughter and urge him to something outrageous and ridiculous. The background of the dull pomp of Potsdam must have made all this more certain. It was bound to come.

And so one day, or, as I have suggested, suddenly late one night, there came to the young artist bending over tonsorial books that quaint, mad, odd,

preposterous inspiration. Ah, what pleasure there is in the madness of youth; it is not like the madness of age, clinging to outworn formulæ; it is the madness of breaking away, of galloping among precipices, of dallying with the impossible, of courting the absurd. And this inspiration, it was in none of the books; the lecturer barbers had not lectured on it, could not dream of it and did not dare to; there was no tradition for it, no precedent; it was mad; and to introduce it into the pomp of Potsdam, that was the daring of madness. And this preposterous inspiration of the absurd young barber-madman was nothing less than a moustache that without any curve at all, or any suggestion of sanity, should go suddenly up at the ends very nearly as high as the eyes!

He must have told his young fellow craftsmen first, for youth goes first to youth with its hallucinations. And they, what could they have said? You cannot say of madness that it is mad, you cannot call absurdity absurd. To have criticized would have revealed jealousy; and as for praise you could not praise a thing like that. They probably shrugged, made gestures; and perhaps one friend warned him. But you cannot warn a man against a madness; if the madness is in possession it will not be warned away: why should it? And then perhaps he went to the old barbers of the Court. You can picture their anger. Age does not learn from youth in any case. But there was the insult to their ancient craft, bad enough if only imagined, but here openly spoken of. And what would come of it? They must have feared, on the one hand, dishonour to their craft if this young barber were treated as his levity deserved; and, on the other hand, could they have feared his success? I think they could not have guessed it.

And then the young idiot with his preposterous inspiration must have looked about to see where he could practise his new absurdity. It should have been enough to have talked about it among his fellow barbers; they would have gone with new zest to their work next day for this delirious interlude, and no harm would have been done. “Fritz,” (or Hans) they would have said, “was a bit on last night, a bit full up,” or whatever phrase they use to touch on drunkenness; and the thing would have been forgotten. We all have our fancies. But this young fool wanted to get his fancy mixed up with practice: that’s where he was mad. And in Potsdam, of all places.

He probably tried his friends first, young barbers at the Court and others of his own standing. None of them were fools enough to be seen going about like that. They had jobs to lose. A Court barber is one thing, a man

who cuts ordinary hair is quite another. Why should they become outcasts because their friend chose to be mad?

He probably tried his inferiors then, but they would have been timid folk; they must have seen the thing was absurd, and of course daren't risk it. Again, why should they?

Did he try to get some noble then to patronize his invention? Probably the first refusals he had soon inflamed his madness more, and he threw caution insanely to the winds, and went straight to the Emperor.

It was probably about the time that the Emperor dismissed Bismarck; certainly the drawings of that time show him still with a sane moustache.

The young barber probably chanced on him in this period, finding him bereft of an adviser, and ready to be swayed by whatever whim should come. Perhaps he was attracted by the barber's hardihood, perhaps the absurdity of his inspiration had some fascination for him, perhaps he merely saw that the thing was new and, feeling jaded, let the barber have his way. And so the frivolity became a fact, the absurdity became visible, and honour and riches came the way of the barber.

A small thing, you might say, however fantastical. And yet I believe the absurdity of that barber to be among the great evils that have brought death nearer to man; whimsical and farcical as it was, yet a thing deadlier than Helen's beauty or Tamerlane's love of skulls. For just as character is outwardly shown so outward things react upon the character; and who, with that daring barber's ludicrous fancy visible always on his face, could quite go the sober way of beneficent monarchs? The fantasy must be mitigated here, set off there; had you such a figure to dress, say for amateur theatricals, you would realize the difficulty. The heavy silver eagle to balance it; the glittering cuirass lower down, preventing the eye from dwelling too long on the barber's absurdity. And then the pose to go with the cuirass and to carry off the wild conceit of that mad, mad barber. He has much to answer for, that eccentric man whose name so few remember. For pose led to actions; and just when Europe most needed a man of wise counsels, restraining the passions of great empires, just then she had ruling over Germany and, unhappily, dominating Austria, a man who every year grew more akin to the folly of that silly barber's youthful inspiration.

Let us forgive the barber. For long I have known from pictures that I have seen of the Kaiser that he has gone to the trenches. Probably he is dead. Let us forgive the barber. But let us bear in mind that the futile fancies

of youth may be deadly things, and that one of them falling on a fickle mind may so stir its shallows as to urge it to disturb and set in motion the avalanches of illimitable grief.

Lost

Describing a visit, say the papers of March 28th, which the Kaiser paid incognito to Cologne Cathedral on March 18th before the great battle, the Cologne correspondent of the Tyd says:

There were only a few persons in the building. Under high arches and in spacious solitude the Kaiser sat, as if in deep thought, before the priests' choir. Behind him his military staff stood respectfully at a distance. Still musing as he rose, the monarch resting both hands on his walking-stick remains standing immovable for some minutes... I shall never forget this picture of the musing monarch praying in Cologne Cathedral on the eve of the great battle.

Probably he won't forget it. The German casualty lists will help to remind him. But what is more to the point is that this expert propagandist has presumably received orders that we are not to forget it, and that the sinister originator of the then impending holocaust should be toned down a little in the eyes at least of the Tyd to something a little more amiable.

And no doubt the little piece of propaganda gave every satisfaction to those who ordered it, or they would not have passed it out to the Tyd, and the touching little scene would never have reached our eyes. At the same time the little tale would have been better suited to the psychology of other countries if he had made the War Lord kneel when he prayed in Cologne Cathedral, and if he had represented the Military Staff as standing out of respect to One who, outside Germany, is held in greater respect than the All Highest.

And had the War Lord really knelt is it not possible that he might have found pity, humility, or even contrition? Things easily overlooked in so large a cathedral when sitting erect, as a War Lord, before the priests' choir, but to be noticed perhaps with one's eyes turned to the ground.

Perhaps he nearly found one of those things. Perhaps he felt (who knows?) just for a moment, that in the dimness of those enormous aisles was something he had lost a long, long while ago.

One is not mistaken to credit the very bad with feeling far, faint appeals from things of glory like Cologne Cathedral; it is that the appeals come to them too far and faint on their headlong descent to ruin.

For what was the War Lord seeking? Did he know that pity for his poor slaughtered people, huddled by him on to our ceaseless machine guns, might be found by seeking there? Or was it only that the lost thing, whatever it was, made that faint appeal to him, passing the door by chance, and drew him in, as the scent of some herb or flower in a moment draws us back years to look for something lost in our youth; we gaze back, wondering, and do not find it.

And to think that perhaps he lost it by very little! That, but for that proud attitude and the respectful staff, he might have seen what was lost, and have come out bringing pity for his people. Might have said to the crowd that gave him that ovation, as we read, outside the door: "My pride has driven you to this needless war, my ambition has made a sacrifice of millions, but it is over, and it shall be no more; I will make no more conquests."

They would have killed him. But for that renunciation, perhaps, however late, the curses of the widows of his people might have kept away from his grave.

But he did not find it. He sat at prayer. Then he stood. Then he marched out: and his staff marched out behind him. And in the gloom of the floor of the vast Cologne Cathedral lie the things that the Kaiser did not find and never will find now. Unnoticed thus, and in some silent moment, passes a man's last chance.

The Last Mirage

The desolation that the German offensive has added to the dominions of the Kaiser cannot easily be imagined by any one who has never seen a desert. Look at it on the map and it is full of the names of towns and villages; it is in Europe, where there are no deserts; it is a fertile province among places of famous names. Surely it is a proud addition to an ambitious monarch's possessions. Surely there is something there that it is worth while to have conquered at the cost of army corps. No, nothing. They are mirage towns. The farms grow Dead Sea fruit. France recedes before the imperial clutch. France smiles, but not for him. His new towns seem to be his because their names have not yet been removed from any map, but they crumble at his approach because France is not for him. His deadly ambition makes a waste before it as it goes, clutching for cities. It comes to them and the cities are not there.

I have seen mirages and have heard others told of, but the best mirages of all we never hear described; the mirage that waterless travellers see at the last. Those fountains rising out of onyx basins, blue and straight into incredible heights, and falling and flooding cool white marble; the haze of spray above their feathery heads through which the pale green domes of weathered copper shimmer and shake a little; mysterious temples, the tombs of unknown kings; the cataracts coming down from rose-quartz cliffs, far off but seen quite clearly, growing to rivers bearing curious barges to the golden courts of Sahara. These things we never see; they are seen at the last by men who die of thirst.

Even so has the Kaiser looked at the smiling plains of France. Even so has he looked on her famous ancient cities and the farms and the fertile fields and the woods and orchards of Picardy. With effort and trouble he has moved towards them. As he comes near to them the cities crumble, the woods shrivel and fall, the farms fade out of Picardy, even the hedgerows go; it is bare, bare desert. He had been sure of Paris, he had dreamed of Versailles and some monstrous coronation, he had thought his insatiable avarice would be sated. For he had plotted for conquest of the world, that boundless greed of his goading him on as a man in the grip of thirst broods upon lakes.

He sees victory near him now. That also will fade in the desert of old barbed wire and weeds. When will he see that a doom is over all his ambitions? For his dreams of victory are like those last dreams that come in deceptive deserts to dying men.

There is nothing good for him in the desert of the Somme. Bapaume is not really there, though it be marked on his maps; it is only a wilderness of slates and brick. Peronne looks like a city a long way off, but when you come near it is only the shells of houses. Pozière, Le Sars, Sapigny, are gone altogether.

And all is Dead Sea fruit in a visible desert. The reports of German victories there are mirage like all the rest; they too will fade into weeds and old barbed wire.

And the advances that look like victories, and the ruins that look like cities, and the shell-beaten broken fields that look like farms, — they and the dreams of conquest and all the plots and ambitions, they are all the mirage of a dying dynasty in a desert it made for its doom.

Bones lead up to the desert, bones are scattered about it, it is the most menacing and calamitous waste of all the deadly places that have been inclement to man. It flatters the Hohenzollerns with visions of victory now because they are doomed by it and are about to die. When their race has died the earth shall smile again, for their deadly mirage shall oppress us no more. The cities shall rise again and the farms come back; hedgerows and orchards shall be seen again; the woods shall slowly lift their heads from the dust; and gardens shall come again where the desert was, to bloom in happier ages that forget the Hohenzollerns.

A Famous Man

Last winter a famous figure walked in Behagnies. Soldiers came to see him from their billets all down the Arras road, from Ervillers and from Sapigny, and from the ghosts of villages back from the road, places that once were villages but are only names now. They would walk three or four miles, those who could not get lorries, for his was one of those names that all men know, not such a name as a soldier or poet may win, but a name that all men know. They used to go there at evening.

Four miles away on the left as you went from Ervillers, the guns mumbled over the hills, low hills over which the Verys from the trenches put up their heads and peered around, — greeny, yellowy heads that turned the sky sickly, and the clouds lit up and went grey again all the night long. As you got near to Behagnies you lost sight of the Verys, but the guns mumbled on. A silly little train used to run on one's left, which used to whistle loudly, as though it asked to be shelled, but I never saw a shell coming its way; perhaps it knew that the German gunners could not calculate how slow it went. It crossed the road as you got down to Behagnies.

You passed the graves of two or three German soldiers with their names on white wooden crosses, — men killed in 1914; and then a little cemetery of a French cavalry regiment, where a big cross stood in the middle with a wreath and a tricolor badge, and the names of the men. And then one saw trees. That was always a wonder, whether one saw their dark shapes in the evening, or whether one saw them by day, and knew from the look of their leaves whether autumn had come yet, or gone. In winter at evening one just saw the black bulk of them, but that was no less marvellous than seeing them green in summer; trees by the side of the Arras-Bapaume road, trees in mid-desert in the awful region of Somme. There were not many of them, just a cluster, fewer than the date palms in an oasis in Sahara, but an oasis is an oasis wherever you find it, and a few trees make it. There are little places here and there, few enough as the Arabs know, that the Sahara's deadly sand has never been able to devastate; and there are places even in the Somme that German malice, obeying the Kaiser as the sand of Sahara obeys the accursed sirocco, has not been able to destroy quite to the uttermost. That little cluster of trees at Behagnies is one of these; Divisional Headquarters

used to shelter beneath them; and near them was a statue on a lawn which probably stood by the windows of some fine house, though there is no trace of the house but the lawn and that statue now.

And over the way on the left a little further on, just past the officers' club, a large hall stood where one saw that famous figure, whom officers and men alike would come so far to see.

The hall would hold perhaps four or five hundred seats in front of a stage fitted up very simply with red, white and blue cloths, but fitted up by some one that understood the job; and at the back of that stage on those winter evenings walked on his flat and world-renowned feet the figure of Charlie Chaplin.

When aëroplanes came over bombing, the dynamos used to stop for they supplied light to other places besides the cinema, and the shade of Charlie Chaplin would fade away. But the men would wait till the aëroplanes had gone and that famous figure came waddling back to the screen. There he amused tired men newly come from the trenches, there he brought laughter to most of the twelve days that they had out of the line.

He is gone from Behagnies now. He did not march in the retreat a little apart from the troops, with head bent forward and hand thrust in jacket, a flat-footed Napoleon: yet he is gone; for no one would have left behind for the enemy so precious a thing as a Charlie Chaplin film. He is gone but he will return. He will come with his cane one day along that Arras road to the old hut in Behagnies; and men dressed in brown will welcome him there again.

He will pass beyond it through those desolate plains, and over the hills beyond them, beyond Bapaume. Far hamlets to the east will know his antics.

And one day surely, in old familiar garb, without court dress, without removing his hat, armed with that flexible cane, he will walk over the faces of the Prussian Guard and, picking up the Kaiser by the collar, with infinite nonchalance in finger and thumb, will place him neatly in a prone position and solemnly sit on his chest.

The Oases of Death

While the German guns were pounding Amiens and the battle of dull Prussianism against Liberty raged on, they buried Richthofen in the British lines.

They had laid him in a large tent with his broken machine outside it. Thence British airmen carried him to the quiet cemetery, and he was buried among the cypresses in this old resting place of French generations just as though he had come there bringing no harm to France.

Five wreaths were on his coffin, placed there by those who had fought against him up in the air. And under the wreaths on the coffin was spread the German flag.

When the funeral service was over three volleys were fired by the escort, and a hundred aviators paid their last respects to the grave of their greatest enemy; for the chivalry that the Prussians have driven from earth and sea lives on in the blue spaces of the air.

They buried Richthofen at evening, and the planes came droning home as they buried him, and the German guns roared on and guns answered, defending Amiens. And in spite of all, the cemetery had the air of quiet, remaining calm and aloof, as all French graveyards are. For they seem to have no part in the cataclysm that shakes all the world but them; they seem to withdraw amongst memories and to be aloof from time, and, above all, to be quite untroubled by the war that rages to-day, upon which they appear to look out listlessly from among their cypress and yew, and dimly, down a vista of centuries. They are very strange, these little oases of death that remain unmoved and green with their trees still growing, in the midst of a desolation as far as the eye can see, in which cities and villages and trees and hedges and farms and fields and churches are all gone, and where hugely broods a desert. It is as though Death, stalking up and down through France for four years, sparing nothing, had recognized for his own his little gardens, and had spared only them.

Anglo-Saxon Tyranny

"We need a sea," says Big-Admiral von Tirpitz, "freed of Anglo-Saxon tyranny." Unfortunately neither the British Admiralty nor the American Navy permit us to know how much of the Anglo-Saxon tyranny is done by American destroyers and how much by British ships and even trawler. It would interest both countries to know, if it could be known. But the Big-Admiral is unjust to France, for the French navy exerts a tyranny at sea that can by no means be overlooked, although naturally from her position in front of the mouth of the Elbe England practises the culminating insupportable tyranny of keeping the High Seas Fleet in the Kiel Canal.

It is not I, but the Big-Admiral, who chose the word tyranny as descriptive of the activities of the Anglo-Saxon navies. He was making a speech at Dusseldorf on May 25th and was reported in the Dusseldorfer Nachrichten on May 27th.

Naturally it does not seem like tyranny to us, even the contrary; but for an admiral, ein Grosse-Admiral, lately commanding a High Seas Fleet, it must have been more galling than we perhaps can credit to be confined in a canal. There was he, who should have been breasting the blue, or at any rate doing something salty and nautical, far out in the storms of that sea that the Germans call an Ocean, with the hurricane raging angrily in his whiskers and now and then wafting tufts of them aloft to white the halyards; there was he constrained to a command the duties of which however nobly he did them could be equally well carried out by any respectable bargee. He hoped for a piracy of which the Lusitania was merely a beginning; he looked for the bombardment of innumerable towns; he pictured slaughter in many a hamlet of fishermen; he planned more than all those things of which U-boat commanders are guilty; he saw himself a murderous old man, terrible to seafarers, and a scourge of the coasts, and fancied himself chronicled in after years by such as told dark tales of Captain Kidd or the awful buccaneers; but he followed in the end no more desperate courses than to sit and watch his ships on a wharf near Kiel like one of Jacob's night watchmen.

No wonder that what appears to us no more than the necessary protection of women and children in seacoast towns from murder should be to him an intolerable tyranny. No wonder that the guarding of travellers of the allied

countries at sea, and even those of the neutrals, should be a most galling thing to the Big-Admiral's thwarted ambition, looking at it from the point of view of one who to white-whiskered age has retained the schoolboy's natural love of the black and yellow flag. A pirate, he would say, has as much right to live as wasps or tigers. The Anglo-Saxon navies, he might argue, have a certain code of rules for use at sea; they let women get first into the boats, for instance, when ships are sinking, and they rescue drowning mariners when they can: no actual harm in all this, he would feel, though it would weaken you, as Hindenburg said of poetry; but if all these little rules are tyrannously enforced on those who may think them silly, what is to become of the pirate? Where, if people like Beattie and Sims had always had their way, would be those rollicking tales of the jolly Spanish Main, and men walking the plank into the big blue sea, and long, low, rakish craft putting in to Indian harbours with a cargo of men and women all hung from the yard-arm? A melancholy has come over the spirit of Big-Admiral von Tirpitz in the years he has spent in the marshes between the Elbe and Kiel, and in that melancholy he sees romance crushed; he sees no more pearl earrings and little gold rings in the hold, he sees British battleships spoiling the Spanish Main, and hateful American cruisers in the old Sargasso Sea; he sees himself, alas, the last of all the pirates.

Let him take comfort. There were always pirates. And in spite of the tyranny of England and America, and of France, which the poor old man perplexed with his troubles forgot, there will be pirates still. Not many perhaps, but enough U-boats will always be able to slip through that tyrannous blockade to spread indiscriminate slaughter amongst the travellers of any nation, enough to hand on the old traditions of murder at sea. And one day Captain Kidd, with such a bow as they used to make in ports of the Spanish Main, will take off his ancient hat, sweeping it low in Hell, and be proud to clasp the hand of the Lord of the Kiel Canal.

Memories

... far-off things
And battles long ago.

Those who live in an old house are necessarily more concerned with paying the plumber, should his art be required, or choosing wall paper that does not clash with the chintzes, than with the traditions that may haunt its corridors. In Ireland, — and no one knows how old that is, for the gods that lived there before the Red Branch came wrote few chronicles on the old grey Irish stones and wrote in their own language, — in Ireland we are more concerned with working it so that Tim Flanagan gets the job he does be looking for.

But in America those who remember Ireland remember her, very often, from old generations; maybe their grandfather migrated, perhaps his grandfather, and Ireland is remembered by old tales treasured among them. Now Tim Flanagan will not be remembered in a year's time when he has the job for which he has got us to agitate, and the jobberies that stir us move not the pen of History.

But the tales that Irish generations hand down beyond the Atlantic have to be tales that are worth remembering. They are tales that have to stand the supreme test, tales that a child will listen to by the fireside of an evening, so that they go down with those early remembered evenings that are last of all to go of the memories of a lifetime. A tale that a child will listen to must have much grandeur. Any cheap stuff will do for us, bad journalism, and novels by girls that could get no other jobs; but a child looks for those things in a tale that are simple and noble and epic, the things that Earth remembers. And so they tell, over there, tales of Sarsfield and of the old Irish Brigade; they tell, of an evening, of Owen Roe O'Neill. And into those tales come the plains of Flanders again and the ancient towns of France, towns famous long ago and famous yet: let us rather think of them as famous names and not as the sad ruins we have seen, melancholy by day and monstrous in the moonlight.

Many an Irishman who sails from America for those historic lands knows that the old trees that stand there have their roots far down in soil once richened by Irish blood. When the Boyne was lost and won, and Ireland had lost her King, many an Irishman with all his wealth in a

scabbard looked upon exile as his sovereign's court. And so they came to the lands of foreign kings, with nothing to offer for the hospitality that was given them but a sword; and it usually was a sword with which kings were well content. Louis XV had many of them, and was glad to have them at Fontenoy; the Spanish King admitted them to the Golden Fleece; they defended Maria Theresa. Landen in Flanders and Cremona knew them. A volume were needed to tell of all those swords; more than one Muse has remembered them. It was not disloyalty that drove them forth; their King was gone, they followed, the oak was smitten and brown were the leaves of the tree.

But no such mournful metaphor applies to the men who march to-day towards the plains where the "Wild Geese" were driven. They go with no country mourning them, but their whole land cheers them on; they go to the inherited battlefields. And there is this difference in their attitude to kings, that those knightly Irishmen of old, driven homeless over-sea, appeared as exiles suppliant for shelter before the face of the Grand Monarch, and he, no doubt with exquisite French grace, gave back to them all they had lost except what was lost forever, salving so far as he could the injustice suffered by each. But to-day when might, for its turn, is in the hands of democracies, the men whose fathers built the Statue of Liberty have left their country to bring back an exiled king to his home, and to right what can be righted of the ghastly wrongs of Flanders.

And if men's prayers are heard, as many say, old saints will hear old supplications going up by starlight with a certain wistful, musical intonation that has linked the towns of Limerick and Cork with the fields of Flanders before.

The Movement

For many years Eliphaz Griggs was comparatively silent. Not that he did not talk on all occasions whenever he could find hearers, he did that at great length; but for many years he addressed no public meeting, and was no part of the normal life of the northeast end of Hyde Park or Trafalgar Square. And then one day he was talking in a public house where he had gone to talk on the only subject that was dear to him. He waited, as was his custom, until five or six men were present, and then he began. "Ye're all damned, I'm saying, damned from the day you were born. Your portion is Tophet."

And on that day there happened what had never happened in his experience before. Men used to listen in a tolerant way, and say little over their beer, for that is the English custom; and that would be all. But to-day a man rose up with flashing eyes and went over to Eliphaz and gripped him by the hand: "They're all damned," said the stranger.

That was the turning point in the life of Eliphaz. Up to that moment he had been a lonely crank, and men thought he was queer; but now there were two of them and he became a Movement. A Movement in England may do what it likes: there was a Movement, before the War, for spoiling tulips in Kew Gardens and breaking church windows; it had its run like the rest.

The name of Eliphaz's new friend was Ezekiel Pim: and they drew up rules for their Movement almost at once; and very soon country inns knew Eliphaz no more. And for some while they missed him where he used to drop in of an evening to tell them they were all damned: and then a man proved one day that the earth was flat, and they all forgot Eliphaz.

But Eliphaz went to Hyde Park and Ezekiel Pim went with him, and there you would see them close to the Marble Arch on any fine Sunday afternoon, preaching their Movement to the people of London. "You are all damned," said Eliphaz. "Your portion shall be damnation for everlasting."

"All damned," added Ezekiel.

Eliphaz was the orator. He would picture Hell to you as it really is. He made you see pretty much what it will be like to wriggle and turn and squirm, and never escape from burning. But Ezekiel Pim, though he seldom said more than three words, uttered those words with such alarming sincerity and had such a sure conviction shining in his eyes that searched right in your face as he said them, and his long hair waved so weirdly as his

head shot forward when he said “You’re all damned,” that Ezekiel Pim brought home to you that the vivid descriptions of Eliphaz really applied to you.

People who lead bad lives get their sensibilities hardened. These did not care very much what Eliphaz said. But girls at school, and several governesses, and even some young clergy, were very much affected. Eliphaz Griggs and Ezekiel Pim seemed to bring Hell so near to you. You could almost feel it baking the Marble Arch from two to four on Sundays. And at four o’clock the Surbiton Branch of the International Anarchists used to come along, and Eliphaz Griggs and Ezekiel Pim would pack up their flag and go, for the pitch belonged to the Surbiton people till six; and the crank Movements punctiliously recognize each other’s rights. If they fought among themselves, which is quite unthinkable, the police would run them in; it is the one thing that an anarchist in England may never do.

When the War came the two speakers doubled their efforts. The way they looked at it was that here was a counter-attraction taking people’s minds off the subject of their own damnation just as they had got them to think about it. Eliphaz worked as he had never worked before; he spared nobody; but it was still Ezekiel Pim who somehow brought it most home to them.

One fine spring afternoon Eliphaz Griggs was speaking at his usual place and time; he had wound himself up wonderfully. “You are damned,” he was saying, “for ever and ever and ever. Your sins have found you out. Your filthy lives will be as fuel round you and shall burn for ever and ever.”

“Look here,” said a Canadian soldier in the crowd, “we shouldn’t allow that in Ottawa.”

“What?” asked an English girl.

“Why, telling us we’re all damned like that,” he said.

“Oh, this is England,” she said. “They may all say what they like here.”

“You are all damned,” said Ezekiel, jerking forward his head and shoulders till his hair flapped out behind. “All, all, all damned.”

“I’m damned if I am,” said the Canadian soldier.

“Ah,” said Ezekiel, and a sly look came into his face.

Eliphaz flamed on. “Your sins are remembered. Satan shall grin at you. He shall heap cinders on you for ever and ever. Woe to you, filthy livers. Woe to you, sinners. Hell is your portion. There shall be none to grieve for you. You shall dwell in torment for ages. None shall be spared, not one.

Woe everlasting... Oh, I beg pardon, gentlemen, I’m sure.” For the Pacifists’ League had been kept waiting three minutes. It was their turn to-day at four.

Nature's Cad

The claim of Professor Grotius Jan Beek to have discovered, or learned, the language of the greater apes has been demonstrated clearly enough. He is not the original discoverer of the fact that they have what may be said to correspond with a language; nor is he the first man to have lived for some while in the jungle protected by wooden bars, with a view to acquiring some knowledge of the meaning of the various syllables that gorillas appear to utter. If so crude a collection of sounds, amounting to less than a hundred words, if words they are, may be called a language, it may be admitted that the Professor has learned it, as his recent experiments show. What he has not proved is his assertion that he has actually conversed with a gorilla, or by signs, or grunts, or any means whatever obtained an insight, as he put it, into its mentality, or, as we should put it, its point of view. This Professor Beek claims to have done; and though he gives us a certain plausible corroboration of a kind which makes his story appear likely, it should be borne in mind that it is not of the nature of proof.

The Professor's story is briefly that having acquired this language, which nobody that has witnessed his experiments will call in question, he went back to the jungle for a week, living all the time in the ordinary explorer's cage of the Blik pattern. Towards the very end of the week a big male gorilla came by, and the Professor attracted it by the one word "Food." It came, he says, close to the cage, and seemed prepared to talk but became very angry on seeing a man there, and beat the cage and would say nothing. The Professor says that he asked it why it was angry. He admits that he had learned no more than forty words of this language, but believes that there are perhaps thirty more. Much however is expressed, as he says, by mere intonation. Anger, for instance; and scores of allied words, such as terrible, frightful, kill, whether noun, verb or adjective, are expressed, he says, by a mere growl. Nor is there any word for "Why," but queries are signified by the inflexion of the voice.

When he asked it why it was angry the gorilla said that men killed him, and added a noise that the professor said was evidently meant to allude to guns. The only word used, he says, in this remark of the gorilla's was the word that signified "man." The sentence as understood by the professor amounted to "Man kill me. Guns." But the word "kill" was represented

simply by a snarl, “me” by slapping its chest, and “guns” as I have explained was only represented by a noise. The Professor believes that ultimately a word for guns may be evolved out of that noise, but thinks that it will take many centuries, and that if during that time guns should cease to be in use, this stimulus being withdrawn, the word will never be evolved at all, nor of course will it be needed.

The Professor tried, by evincing interest, ignorance, and incredulity, and even indignation, to encourage the gorilla to say more; but to his disappointment, all the more intense after having exchanged that one word of conversation with one of the beasts, the gorilla only repeated what it had said, and beat on the cage again. For half an hour this went on, the Professor showing every sign of sympathy, the gorilla raging and beating upon the cage.

It was half an hour of the most intense excitement to the Professor, during which time he saw the realization of dreams that many considered crazy, glittering as it were within his grasp, and all the while this ridiculous gorilla would do nothing but repeat the mere shred of a sentence and beat the cage with its great hands; and the heat of course was intense. And by the end of the half hour the excitement and the heat seem to have got the better of the Professor’s temper, and he waved the disgusting brute angrily away with a gesture that probably was not much less impatient than the gorilla’s own. And at that the animal suddenly became voluble. He beat more furiously than ever upon the cage and slipped his great fingers through the bars, trying to reach the Professor, and poured out volumes of ape-chatter.

Why, why did men shoot at him, he asked. He made himself terrible, therefore men ought to love him. That was the whole burden of what the Professor calls its argument. “Me, me terrible,” two slaps on the chest and then a growl. “Man love me.” And then the emphatic negative word, and the sound that meant guns, and sudden furious rushes at the cage to try to get at the Professor.

The gorilla, Professor Beek explains, evidently admired only strength; whenever he said “I make myself terrible to Man,” a sentence he often repeated, he drew himself up and thrust out his huge chest and bared his frightful teeth; and certainly, the Professor says, there was something terribly grand about the menacing brute. “Me terrible,” he repeated again and again, “Me terrible. Sky, sun, stars with me. Man love me. Man love me. No?” It meant that all the great forces of nature assisted him and his

terrible teeth, which he gnashed repeatedly, and that therefore man should love him, and he opened his great jaws wide as he said this, showing all the brutal force of them.

There was to my mind a genuine ring in Professor Beek's story, because he was obviously so much more concerned, and really troubled, by the dreadful depravity of this animal's point of view, or mentality as he called it, than he was concerned with whether or not we believed what he had said.

And I mentioned that there was a circumstance in his story of a plausible and even corroborative nature. It is this. Professor Beek, who noticed at the time a bullet wound in the tip of the gorilla's left ear, by means of which it was luckily identified, put his analysis of its mentality in writing and showed it to several others, before he had any way of accounting for the beast having such a mind.

Long afterwards it was definitely ascertained that this animal had been caught when young on the slopes of Kilimanjaro and trained and even educated, so far as such things are possible, by an eminent German Professor, a persona grata at the Court of Berlin.

The Home of Herr Schnitzelhaaser

The guns in the town of Greinstein were faintly audible. The family of Schnitzelhaaser lived alone there in mourning, an old man and old woman. They never went out or saw any one, for they knew they could not speak as though they did not mourn. They feared that their secret would escape them. They had never cared for the war that the War Lord made. They no longer cared what he did with it. They never read his speeches; they never hung out flags when he ordered flags: they hadn't the heart to.

They had had four sons.

The lonely old couple would go as far as the shop for food. Hunger stalked behind them. They just beat hunger every day, and so saw evening: but there was nothing to spare. Otherwise they did not go out at all. Hunger had been coming slowly nearer of late. They had nothing but the ration, and the ration was growing smaller. They had one pig of their own, but the law said you might not kill it. So the pig was no good to them.

They used to go and look at that pig sometimes when hunger pinched. But more than that they did not dare to contemplate.

Hunger came nearer and nearer. The war was going to end by the first of July. The War Lord was going to take Paris on this day and that would end the war at once. But then the war was always going to end. It was going to end in 1914, and their four sons were to have come home when the leaves fell. The War Lord had promised that. And even if it did end, that would not bring their four sons home now. So what did it matter what the War Lord said.

It was thoughts like these that they knew they had to conceal. It was because of thoughts like these that they did not trust themselves to go out and see other people, for they feared that by their looks if by nothing else, or by their silence or perhaps their tears, they might imply a blasphemy against the All Highest. And hunger made one so hasty. What might one not say? And so they stayed indoors.

But now. What would happen now? The War Lord was coming to Greinstein in order to hear the guns. One officer of the staff was to be billeted in their house. And what would happen now?

They talked the whole thing over. They must struggle and make an effort. The officer would be there for one evening. He would leave in the

morning quite early in order to make things ready for the return to Potsdam: he had charge of the imperial car. So for one evening they must be merry. They would suppose, it was Herr Schnitzelhaaser's suggestion, they would think all the evening that Belgium and France and Luxemburg all attacked the Fatherland, and that the Kaiser, utterly unprepared, quite unprepared, called on the Germans to defend their land against Belgium.

Yes, the old woman could imagine that; she could think it all the evening.

And then, — it was no use not being cheerful altogether, — then one must imagine a little more, just for the evening: it would come quite easy; one must think that the four boys were alive.

Hans too? (Hans was the youngest).

Yes, all four. Just for the evening.

But if the officer asks?

He will not ask. What are four soldiers?

So it was all arranged; and at evening the officer came. He brought his own rations, so hunger came no nearer. Hunger just lay down outside the door and did not notice the officer.

A this supper the officer began to talk. The Kaiser himself, he said, was at the Schartzhaus.

"So," said Herr Schnitzelhaaser; "just over the way." So close. Such an honour.

And indeed the shadow of the Schartzhaus darkened their garden in the morning.

It was such an honour, said Frau Schnitzelhaaser too. And they began to praise the Kaiser. So great a War Lord, she said; the most glorious war there had ever been.

Of course, said the officer, it would end on the first of July.

Of course, said Frau Schnitzelhaaser. And so great an admiral, too. One must remember that also. And how fortunate we were to have him: one must not forget that. Had it not been for him the crafty Belgians would have attacked the Fatherland, but they were struck down before they could do it. So much better to prevent a bad deed like that than merely to punish after. So wise. And had it not been for him, if it had not been for him...

The old man saw that she was breaking down and hastily he took up that feverish praise. Feverish it was, for their hunger and bitter loss affected their minds no less than illness does, and the things they did they did hastily

and intemperately. His praise of the War Lord raced on as the officer ate. He spoke of him as of those that benefit man, as of monarchs who bring happiness to their people. And now, he said, he is here in the Schartzhaus beside us, listening to the guns just like a common soldier.

Finally the guns, as he spoke, coughed beyond ominous hills. Contentedly the officer went on eating. He suspected nothing of the thoughts his host and hostess were hiding. At last he went upstairs to bed.

As fierce exertion is easy to the fevered, so they had spoken; and it wears them, so they were worn. The old woman wept when the officer went out of hearing. But old Herr Schnitzelhaaser picked up a big butcher's knife. "I will bear it no more," he said.

His wife watched him in silence as he went away with his knife. Out of the house he went and into the night. Through the open door she saw nothing; all was dark; even the Schartzhaus, where all was gay to-night, stood dark for fear of aëroplanes. The old woman waited in silence.

When Herr Schnitzelhaaser returned there was blood on his knife.

"What have you done?" the old woman asked him quite calmly. "I have killed our pig," he said.

She broke out then, all the more recklessly for the long restraint of the evening; the officer must have heard her.

"We are lost! We are lost!" she cried. "We may not kill our pig. Hunger has made you mad. You have ruined us."

"I will bear it no longer," he said. "I have killed our pig."

"But they will never let us eat it," she cried. "Oh, you have ruined us!"

"If you did not dare to kill our pig," he said, "why did you not stop me when you saw me go? You saw me go with the knife?"

"I thought," she said, "you were going to kill the Kaiser."

A Deed of Mercy

As Hindenburg and the Kaiser came down, as we read, from Mont d'Hiver, during the recent offensive, they saw on the edge of a crater two wounded British soldiers. The Kaiser ordered that they should be cared for: their wounds were bound up and they were given brandy, and brought round from unconsciousness. That is the German account of it, and it may well be true. It was a kindly act.

Probably had it not been for this the two men would have died among those desolate craters; no one would have known, and no one could have been blamed for it.

The contrast of this spark of imperial kindness against the gloom of the background of the war that the Kaiser made is a pleasant thing to see, even though it illuminates for only a moment the savage darkness in which our days are plunged. It was a kindness that probably will long be remembered to him. Even we, his enemies, will remember it. And who knows but that when most he needs it his reward for the act will be given him.

For Judas, they say, once in his youth, gave his cloak, out of compassion, to a shivering beggar, who sat shaken with ague, in rags, in bitter need. And the years went by and Judas forgot his deed. And long after, in Hell, Judas they say was given one day's respite at the end of every year because of this one kindness he had done so long since in his youth. And every year he goes, they say, for a day and cools himself among the Arctic bergs; once every year for century after century.

Perhaps some sailor on watch on a misty evening blown far out of his course away to the north saw something ghostly once on an iceberg floating by, or heard some voice in the dimness that seemed like the voice of man, and came home with this weird story. And perhaps, as the story passed from lip to lip, men found enough justice in it to believe it true. So it came down the centuries.

Will seafarers ages hence on dim October evenings, or on nights when the moon is ominous through mist, red and huge and uncanny, see a lonely figure sometimes on the loneliest part of the sea, far north of where the Lusitania sank, gathering all the cold it can? Will they see it hugging a crag of iceberg wan as itself, helmet, cuirass and ice pale-blue in the mist together? Will it look towards them with ice-blue eyes through the mist, and

will they question it, meeting on those bleak seas? Will it answer — or will the North wind howl like voices? Will the cry of seals be heard, and ice floes grinding, and strange birds lost upon the wind that night, or will it speak to them in those distant years and tell them how it sinned, betraying man?

It will be a grim, dark story in that lonely part of the sea, when he confesses to sailors, blown too far north, the dreadful thing he plotted against man. The date on which he is seen will be told from sailor to sailor. Queer taverns of distant harbours will know it well. Not many will care to be at sea that day, and few will risk being driven by stress of weather on the Kaiser's night to the bergs of the haunted part of sea.

And yet for all the grimness of the pale-blue phantom, with cuirass and helmet and eyes shimmering on deadly icebergs, and yet for all the sorrow of the wrong he did against man, the women drowned and the children, and all the good ships gone, yet will the horrified mariners meeting him in the mist grudge him no moment of the day he has earned, or the coolness he gains from the bergs, because of the kindness he did to the wounded men. For the mariners in their hearts are kindly men, and what a soul gains from kindness will seem to them well deserved.

Last Scene of All

After John Calleron was hit he carried on in a kind of twilight of the mind. Things grew dimmer and calmer; harsh outlines of events became blurred; memories came to him; there was a singing in his ears like far-off bells. Things seemed more beautiful than they had a while ago; to him it was for all the world like evening after some quiet sunset, when lawns and shrubs and woods and some old spire look lovely in the late light, and one reflects on past days. Thus he carried on, seeing things dimly. And what is sometimes called "the roar of battle," those aërial voices that snarl and moan and whine and rage at soldiers, had grown dimmer too. It all seemed further away, and littler, as far things are. He still heard the bullets: there is something so violently and intensely sharp in the snap of passing bullets at short ranges that you hear them in deepest thought, and even in dreams. He heard them, tearing by, above all things else. The rest seemed fainter and dimmer, and smaller and further away.

He did not think he was very badly hit, but nothing seemed to matter as it did a while ago. Yet he carried on.

And then he opened his eyes very wide and found he was back in London again in an underground train. He knew it at once by the look of it. He had made hundreds of journeys, long ago, by those trains. He knew by the dark, outside, that it had not yet left London; but what was odder than that, if one stopped to think of it, was that he knew exactly where it was going. It was the train that went away out into the country where he used to live as a boy. He was sure of that without thinking.

When he began to think how he came to be there he remembered the war as a very far-off thing. He supposed he had been unconscious a very long time. He was all right now.

Other people were sitting beside him on the same seat. They all seemed like people he remembered a very long time ago. In the darkness opposite, beyond the windows of the train, he could see their reflections clearly. He looked at the reflections but could not quite remember.

A woman was sitting on his left. She was quite young. She was more like some one that he most deeply remembered than all the others were. He gazed at her, and tried to clear his mind.

He did not turn and stare at her, but he quietly watched her reflection before him in the dark. Every detail of her dress, her young face, her hat, the little ornaments she wore, were minutely clear before him, looking out of the dark. So contented she looked you would say she was untouched by war.

As he gazed at the clear calm face and the dress that seemed neat though old and, like all things, so faraway, his mind grew clearer and clearer. It seemed to him certain it was the face of his mother, but from thirty years ago, out of old memories and one picture. He felt sure it was his mother as she had been when he was very small. And yet after thirty years how could he know? He puzzled to try and be quite sure. But how she came to be there, looking like that, out of those oldest memories, he did not think of at all.

He seemed to be hugely tired by many things and did not want to think. Yet he was very happy, more happy even than tired men just come home all new to comfort.

He gazed and gazed at the face in the dark. And then he felt quite sure.

He was about to speak. Was she looking at him? Was she watching him, he wondered. He glanced for the first time to his own reflection in that clear row of faces.

His own reflection was not there, but blank dark showed between his two neighbours. And then he knew he was dead.

Old England

Towards winter's end on a high, big, bare down, in the south of England, John Plowman was plowing. He was plowing the brown field at the top of the hill, good soil of the clay; a few yards lower down was nothing but chalk, with shallow flinty soil and steep to plow; so they let briars grow there. For generations his forbears had plowed on the top of that hill. John did not know how many. The hills were very old; it might have been always.

He scarcely looked to see if his furrow was going straight. The work he was doing was so much in his blood that he could almost feel if furrows were straight or not. Year after year they moved on the same old landmarks; thorn trees and briars mostly guided the plow, where they stood on the untamed land beyond; the thorn trees grew old at their guiding, and still the furrows varied not by the breadth of a hoof-mark.

John, as he plowed, had leisure to meditate on much besides the crops; he knew so much of the crops that his thoughts could easily run free from them; he used to meditate on who they were that lived in briar and thorn tree, and danced as folk said all through midsummer night, and sometimes blessed and sometimes harmed the crops; for he knew that in Old England were wonderful ancient things, odder and older things than many folks knew. And his eyes had leisure to see much beside the furrows, for he could almost feel the furrows going straight.

One day at his plowing, as he watched the thorn ahead, he saw the whole big hill besides, looking south, and the lands below it; one day he saw in the bright sun of late winter a horseman riding the road through the wide lands below. The horseman shone as he rode, and wore white linen over what was shining, and on the linen was a big red cross. "One of them knights," John Plowman said to himself or his horse, "going to them crusades." And he went on with his plowing all that day satisfied, and remembered what he had seen for years, and told his son.

For there is in England, and there always was, mixed with the needful things that feed or shelter the race, the wanderer-feeling for romantic causes that runs deep and strange through the other thoughts, as the Gulf Stream runs through the sea. Sometimes generations of John Plowman's family would go by and no high romantic cause would come to sate that feeling.

They would work on just the same though a little sombrely, as though some good thing had been grudged them. And then the Crusades had come, and John Plowman had seen the Red Cross knight go by, riding towards the sea in the morning, and Jon Plowman was satisfied.

Some generations later a man of the same name was plowing the same hill. They still plowed the brown clay at the top and left the slope wild, though there were many changes. And the furrows were wonderfully straight still. And half he watched a thorn tree ahead as he plowed and half he took in the whole hill sloping south and the wide lands below it, far beyond which was the sea. They had a railway now down in the valley. The sunlight glittering near the end of winter shone on a train that was marked with great white squares and red crosses on them.

John Plowman stopped his horses and looked at the train. “An ambulance train,” he said, “coming up from the coast.” He thought of the lads he knew and wondered if any were there. He pitied the men in that train and envied them. And then there came to him the thought of England’s cause and of how those men had upheld it, at sea and in crumbling cities. He thought of the battle whose echoes reached sometimes to that field, whispering to furrows and thorn trees that had never heard them before. He thought of the accursed tyrant’s cruel might, and of the lads that had faced it. He saw the romantic splendour of England’s cause. He was old but had seen the glamour for which each generation looked. Satisfied in his heart and cheered with a new content he went on with his age-old task in the business of man with the hills.

UNHAPPY FAR-OFF THINGS



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UNHAPPY FAR-OFF THINGS

BY

LORD DUNSANY



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The first edition's title page

Preface

I have chosen a title that shall show that I make no claim for this book to be "up-to-date." As the first title indicates, I hoped to show, to as many as might to read my words, something of the extent of the wrongs that the people of France had suffered. There is no such need any longer. The tales, so far as they went, I gather together here for the few that seem to read my books in England.

Dunsany.

A Dirge Of Victory (Sonnet)

Lift not thy trumpet, Victory, to the sky,
  Nor through battalions nor by batteries blow,
  But over hollows full of old wire go,
Where among dregs of war the long-dead lie
With wasted iron that the guns passed by.
  When they went eastwards like a tide at flow;
  There blow thy trumpet that the dead may know,
Who waited for thy coming, Victory.

It is not we that have deserved thy wreath,
  They waited there among the towering weeds.
The deep mud burned under the thermite's breath,
  And winter cracked the bones that no man heeds:
Hundreds of nights flamed by: the seasons passed.
And thou last come to them at last, at last!

The Cathedral Of Arras

On the great steps of Arras Cathedral I saw a procession, in silence, standing still.

They were in orderly and perfect lines, stirring or swaying slightly: sometimes they bent their heads, sometimes two leaned together, but for the most part they were motionless. It was the time when the fashion is just changing and some were newly all in shining yellow, while others still wore green.

I went up the steps amongst them, the only human thing, for men and women worship no more in Arras Cathedral, and the trees have come instead; little humble things, all less than four years old, in great numbers thronging the steps processionally, and growing in perfect rows just where step meets step. They have come to Arras with the wind and the rain; which enter the aisles together whenever they will, and go wherever man went; they have such a reverent air, the young limes on the three flights of steps, that you would say they did not know that Arras Cathedral was fallen on evil days, that they did not know they looked on ruin and vast disaster, but thought that these great walls open to stars and sun were the natural and fitting place for the worship of little weeds.

Behind them the shattered houses of Arras seemed to cluster about the cathedral as, one might fancy easily, hurt and frightened children, so wistful are their gaping windows and old, grey empty gables, so melancholy and puzzled. They are more like a little old people come upon trouble, gazing at their great elder companion and not knowing what to do.

But the facts of Arras are sadder than a poet's most tragic fancies. In the western front of Arras Cathedral stand eight pillars rising from the ground; above them stood four more. Of the four upper pillars the two on the left are gone, swept away by shells from the north: and a shell has passed through the neck of one of the two that is left, just as a bullet might go through a daffodil's stem.

The left-hand corner of that western wall has been caught from the north, by some tremendous shell which has torn the whole corner down in a mound of stone: and still the walls have stood.

I went in through the western doorway. All along the nave lay a long heap of white stones, with grass and weeds on the top, and a little trodden path over the grass and weeds. This is all that remained of the roof of Arras

Cathedral and of any chairs or pews there may have been in the nave, or anything that may have hung above them. It was all down but one slender arch that crossed the nave just at the transept; it stood out against the sky, and all who saw it wondered how it stood.

In the southern aisle panes of green glass, in twisted frame of lead, here and there lingered, like lonely leaves on an apple-tree-after a hailstorm in spring. The aisles still had their roofs over them which those stout old walls held up in spite of all.

Where the nave joins the transept the ruin is most enormous. Perhaps there was more to bring down there, so the Germans brought it down: there may have been a tower there, for all I know, or a spire.

I stood on the heap and looked towards the altar. To my left all was ruin. To my right two old saints in stone stood by the southern door. The door had been forced open long ago, and stood as it was opened, partly broken. A great round hole gaped in the ground outside; it was this that had opened the door.

Just beyond the big heap, on the left of the chancel, stood something made of wood, which almost certainly had been the organ.

As I looked at these things there passed through the desolate sanctuaries, and down an aisle past pillars pitted with shrapnel, a sad old woman, sad even for a woman of North-East France. She seemed to be looking after the mounds and stones that had once been the cathedral; perhaps she had once been the Bishop's servant, or the wife of one of the vergers; she only remained of all who had been there in other days, she and the pigeons and jackdaws. I spoke to her. All Arras, she said, was ruined. The great cathedral was ruined, her own family were ruined utterly, and she pointed to where the sad houses gazed from forlorn dead windows. Absolute ruin, she said; but there must be no armistice. No armistice. No. It was necessary that there should be no armistice at all. No armistice with Germans.

She passed on, resolute and sad, and the guns boomed on beyond Arras.

A French interpreter, with the Sphinxes' heads on his collar, showed me a picture postcard with a photograph of the chancel as it was five years ago. It was the very chancel before which I was standing. To see that photograph astonished me, and to know that the camera that took it must have stood where I was standing, only a little lower down, under the great heap. Though one knew there had been an altar there, and candles and roof and carpet, and all the solemnity of a cathedral's interior, yet to see that

photograph and to stand on that weedy heap, in the wind, under the jackdaws, was a contrast with which the mind fumbled.

I walked a little with the French interpreter. We came to a little shrine in the southern aisle. It had been all paved with marble, and the marble was broken into hundreds of pieces, and someone had carefully picked up all the bits, and laid them together on the altar.

And this pathetic heap that was gathered of broken bits had drawn many to stop and gaze at it; and idly, as soldiers will, they had written their names on them: every bit had a name on it, with but a touch of irony the Frenchman said, "All that is necessary to bring your name to posterity is to write it on one of these stones.", "No," I said, "I will do it by describing all this." And we both laughed.

I have not done it yet: there is more to say of Arras. As I begin the tale of ruin and wrong, the man who did it totters. His gaudy power begins to stream away like the leaves of autumn. Soon his throne will be bare, and I shall have but begun to say what I have to say of calamity in cathedral and little gardens of Arras.

The winter of the Hohenzollerns will come; sceptre, uniforms, stars and courtiers all gone; still the world will not know half of the bitter wrongs of Arras. And spring will bring a new time and cover the trenches with green, and the pigeons will preen themselves on the shattered towers, and the lime-trees along the steps will grow taller and brighter, and happier men will sing in the streets untroubled by any War Lord; by then, perhaps, I may have told, to such as care to read, what such a war did in an ancient town, already romantic when romance was young, when war came suddenly without mercy, without pity, out of the north and east, on little houses, carved galleries, and gardens; churches, cathedrals and the jackdaws' nests.

A Good War

Nietsche said, “You have heard that a good cause justifies any war, but I say unto you that a good war justifies any cause.”

A man was walking alone over a plain so desolate that, if you have never seen it, the mere word desolation could never convey to you the melancholy surroundings that mourned about this man on his lonely walk. Far off a vista of trees followed a cheerless road all dead as mourners suddenly stricken dead in some funereal procession. By this road he had come; but when he had reached a certain point he turned from the road at once, branching away to the left, led by a line of bushes that may once have been a lane. For some while his feet had rustled through long neglected grass; sometimes he lifted them up to step over a telephone wire that lolled over old entanglements and bushes; often he came to rusty strands of barbed wire and walked through them where they had been cut, perhaps years ago, by huge shells; then his feet hissed on through the grass again, dead grass that had hissed about his boots all through the afternoon.

Once he sat down to rest on the edge of a crater, weary with such walking as he had never seen before; and after he had stayed there a little while a cat that seemed to have its home in that wild place started suddenly up and leaped away over the weeds. It seemed an animal totally wild, and utterly afraid of man.

Grey bare hills surrounded the waste: a partridge called far off: evening was drawing in. He rose wearily, and yet with a certain fervour, as one that pursues With devotion a lamentable quest. Looking round him as he left his resting-place he saw a cabbage or two that after some while had come back to what was a field and had sprouted on the edge of a shell-hole. A yellowing convolvulus climbed up a dead weed. Weeds, grass and tumbled earth were all about him. It would be no better when he went on. Still he went on. A flower or two peeped up among the weeds. He stood up and looked at the landscape and drew no hope from that, the shattered trunk of a stricken tree leered near him, white trenches scarred the hillside. He followed an old trench through a hedge of elder, passed under more wire, by a great rusty shell that had not burst, passed by a dug-out where something grey seemed to lie down at the bottom of many steps. Black fungi grew near the entrance. He went on and on over shell-holes, passing round them where

they were deep, stepping into or over the small ones. Little burrs clutched at him; he went rustling on, the only sound in the waste but the clicking of shattered iron. Now he was among nettles. He came by many small unnatural valleys. He passed more trenches only guarded by fungi. While it was light he followed little paths, marvelling who made them. Once he got into a trench. Dandelions leaned across it as though to bar his way, believing man to have gone and to have no right to return. Weeds thronged, in thousands here. It was the day of the weeds. It was only they that seemed to triumph in those fields deserted of man. He passed on down the trench and never knew whose trench it once had been. Frightful shells had smashed it here and there, and had twisted iron as though round gigantic fingers that had twiddled it idly a moment and let it drop to lie in the rain for ever. He passed more dug-outs and black fungi, watching them; and then he left the trench, going straight on over the open: again dead grasses hissed about his feet, sometimes small wire sang faintly He passed through a belt of nettles and thence to dead grass again. And now the light of the afternoon was beginning to dwindle away. He had intended to reach his journey's end by daylight, for he was past the time of life when one wanders after dark, but he had not contemplated the difficulty of walking over that road, or dreamed that lanes he knew could be so foundered and merged, in that mournful desolate moor.

Evening was filling fast, still he kept on. It was the time when the cornstacks would once have begun to grow indistinct, and slowly turn grey in the greyness, and homesteads one by one would have lit their innumerable lights. But evening now came down on a dreary desolation: and a cold wind arose; and the traveller heard the mournful sound of iron flapping on broken things, and knew that this was the sound that would haunt the waste for ever.

And evening settled down, a huge grey canvas waiting for sombre pictures; a setting for all the dark tales of the world, haunted forever a grizzly place was haunted ever, in any century, in any land; but not by mere ghosts from all those thousands of graves and half-buried bodies and sepulchral shell-holes; haunted by things huger and more disastrous than that; haunted by wailing ambitions, under the stars or moon, drifting across the rubbish that once was villages, which strews the lonely plain; the lost ambitions of two Emperors and a Sultan wailing from wind to wind and whimpering for dominion of the world.

The cold wind blew over the blasted heath and bits of broken iron flapped on and on.

And now the traveller hurried, for night was falling, and such a night as three witches might have brewed in a cauldron. He went on eagerly but with infinite sadness. Over the sky-line strange rockets went up from the war, peered oddly over the earth and went down again. Very far off a few soldiers lit a little fire of their own. The night grew colder; tap, tap, went broken iron.

And at last the traveller stopped in the lonely night and looked round him attentively, and appeared to be satisfied that he had come within sight of his journey's end, although to ordinary eyes the spot to which he had come differed in no way from the rest of the waste.

He went no further, but turned round and round, peering piece by piece at that weedy and cratered earth.

He was looking for the village where he was born.

The House With Two Storeys

I came again to Croisilles.

I looked for the sunken road that we used to hold in support, with its row of little shelters in the bank and the carved oak saints above them here and there that had survived the church in Croisilles. I could have found it with my eyes shut. With my eyes open I could not find it. I did not recognize the lonely metalled road down which lorries were rushing for the little lane so full of life, whose wheel-ruts were three years old.

As I gazed about me looking for our line, I passed an old French civilian looking down at a slight mound of white stone that rose a little higher than the road. He was walking about uncertainly, when first I noticed him, as though he was not sure where he was. But now he stood quite still looking down at the mound.

"Voilà ma maison," he said.

He said no more than that: this astounding remark, this gesture that indicated such calamity, were quite simply made. There was nothing whatever of theatrical pose that we wrongly associate with the French, because they conceal their emotions less secretly than we; there were no tragic tones in his voice: only a trace of deep affection showed in one of the words he used. He spoke as a woman might say of her only child, "Look at *my* baby."

"Voilà ma maison," he said.

I tried to say in his language what I felt; and after my attempt he spoke of his house.

It was very old. Down underneath, he said, it dated from feudal times; though I did not quite make out whether all that lay under that mound had been so old or whether he only meant the cellars of his house. It was a fine high house, he said, as much as two storeys high. No one that is familiar with houses of fifty storeys, none even that has known palaces, will smile at this old man's efforts to tell of his high house, and to make me believe that it rose to two storeys high, as we stood together by that sad white mound. He told me that his son was killed. And that disaster strangely did not move me so much as the white mound that had been a house and had had two storeys, for it seems to be common to every French family with whose fathers I have chanced to speak in ruined cities or on busy roads of France.

He pointed to a huge white mound beyond on the top of which someone had stuck a small cross of wood. “The church,” he said. And that I knew already.

In very inadequate French I tried to comfort him. I told him that surely France would build his house again. Perhaps even the allies; for I could not believe that we shall have done enough if we merely drive the Germans out of France and leave this poor old man still wandering homeless. I told him that surely in the future Croisilles would stand again.

He took no interest in anything that I said. His house of two storeys was down, his son was dead, the little village of Croisilles had gone away; he had only one hope from the future. When I had finished speaking of the future, he raised a knobbed stick that he carried, up to the level of his throat, surely his son’s old trench stick, and there he let it dangle from a piece of string in the handle, which he held against his neck. He watched me shrewdly and attentively meanwhile, for I was a stranger and was to be taught something I might not know — a thing that it was necessary for all men to learn. “Le Kaiser,” he said. “Yes;” I said, “the Kaiser.” But I pronounced the word Kaiser differently from him, and he repeated again “Le Kaiser,” and watched me closely to be sure that I understood. And then he said “Pendu,” and made the stick quiver a little as it dangled from its string. “Oui,” I said, “Pendu.”

Did I understand? He was not yet quite sure. It was important that this thing should be quite decided between us as we stood on this road through what had been Croisilles, where he had lived through many sunny years and I had dwelt for a season amongst rats. “Pendu” he said. Yes, I agreed.

It was all right. The old man almost smiled.

I offered him a cigarette and we lit two from an apparatus of flint and steel and petrol that the old man had in his pocket.

He showed me a photograph of himself and a passport to prove, I suppose, that he was not a spy. One could not recognize the likeness, for it must have been taken on some happier day, before he had seen his house of two storeys lying there by the road. But he was no spy, for there were tears in his eyes; and Prussians I think have no tears for what we saw across the village of Croisilles.

I spoke of the rebuilding of his house no more, I spoke no more of the new Croisilles shining through future years; for these were not the things that he saw in the future, and these were not the hopes of the poor old man.

He had one dark hope of the future, and no others. He hoped to see the Kaiser hung for the wrong he had done to Croisilles. It was for this hope he lived.

Madame or señor of whatever far country, who may chance to see these words, blame not this old man for the fierce hope he cherished. It was the only hope he had. You, Madame, with your garden, your house, your church, the village where all know you, you may hope as a Christian should, there is wide room for hope in your future. You shall see the seasons move over your garden, you shall busy yourself with your home, and speak and share with your neighbours innumerable small joys, and find consolation and beauty, and at last rest, in and around the church whose spire you see from your home. You, señor, with your son perhaps growing up, perhaps wearing already some sword that you wore once, you can turn back to your memories or look with hope to the future with equal ease.

The man that I met in Croisilles had none of these things at all. He had that one hope only.

Do not, I pray you, by your voice or vote, or by any power or influence that you have, do anything to take away from this poor old Frenchman the only little hope he has left. The more trivial his odd hope appears to you compared with your own high hopes that come so easily to you amongst all your fields and houses, the more cruel a thing must it be to take it from him.

I learned many things in Croisilles, and the last of them is this strange one the old man taught me. I turned and shook hands with him and said good-bye, for I wished to see again our old front line that we used to hold over the hill, now empty, silent at last. “The Boche is defeated,” I said.

“Vaincu, vaincu,” he repeated. And I left him with something almost like happiness looking out of his tearful eyes.

Bermondsey versus Wurtemburg

The trees grew thinner and thinner along the road, then ceased altogether, and suddenly we saw Albert in the wood of the ghosts of murdered trees, all grey and deserted.

Descending into Albert past trees in their agony we came all at once on the houses. You did not see them far off as in other cities; we came on them all at once as you come on a corpse in the grass.

We stopped and stood by a house that was covered with plaster marked off to look like great stones, its pitiful pretence laid bare, the slates gone and the rooms gone, the plaster all pitted with shrapnel. Near it lay an iron railing, a hand-rail blown there from the railway bridge; a shrapnel bullet had passed through its twisted stem as though it had gone through butter. And beside the hand-rail lay one of the great steel supports of the bridge that had floated there upon some flaming draught; the end of it bent and splayed as though it had been a slender cane that someone had shoved too hard into the earth.

There had been a force abroad in Albert that could do these things, an iron force that had no mercy for iron, a mighty mechanical contrivance that could take machinery and pull it all to pieces in a moment as a child takes a flower to pieces petal by petal.

When such a force was abroad what chance had man? It had come down upon Albert suddenly, and railway lines and bridges had drooped and withered and the houses had stooped down in the blasting heat, and in that attitude I found them still, worn-out, melancholy heaps overcome by disaster.

Pieces of paper rustled about like footsteps, dirt covered the ruins, fragments of rusty shells lay as unsightly and dirty as that which they had destroyed. Cleaned up and polished, and priced at half a crown apiece, these fragments may look romantic some day in a London shop, but to-day in Albert they look unclean and untidy, like a cheap knife sticking up from a murdered woman's ribs, whose dress is long out of fashion.

The stale smell of war arose from the desolation.

A British helmet dinted in like an old bowler, but tragic not absurd, lay near a barrel and a teapot.

On a wall that rose above a heap of dirty and smashed rafters was written in red paint KOMPe I.M.B.K. 184. The red paint had dripped down the wall from every letter. Verily we stood upon the scene of the murder.

Opposite those red letters across the road was a house with traces of a pleasant ornament below the sills of the windows, a design of grapes and vine. Someone had stuck up a wooden boot on a peg outside the door.

Perhaps the cheery design on the wall attracted me. I entered the house and looked round.

A chunk of shell lay on the floor, and a little decanter, only chipped at the lip, and part of a haversack of horse-skin. There were pretty tiles on the floor, but dry mud buried them deep: it was like the age-old dirt that gathers in temples in Africa. A man's waistcoat lay on the mud and part of a woman's stays: the waistcoat was black and was probably kept for Sundays. That was all that there was to see on the ground floor, no more flotsam than that had come down to these days from peace.

A forlorn stairway tried still to wind upstairs. It went up out of a corner of the room. It seemed still to believe that there was an upper storey, still to feel that this was a house, there seemed a hope in the twists of that battered staircase that men would yet come again and seek sleep at evening by way of those broken steps; the hand-rail and the banisters streamed down from the top, a woman's dress lolled down from the upper room above those aimless steps, the laths of the ceiling gaped, the plaster was gone; of all the hopes men hope that can never be fulfilled, of all desires that ever come too late, most futile was the hope expressed by that stairway's posture that ever a family would come home there again or tread those steps once more. And, if in some far country one should hope, who has not seen Albert, out of compassion for these poor people of France, that where a staircase still remains there may be enough of a house to shelter those who called it home again, I will tell one thing more: there blew inside that house the same wind that blew outside, the wind that wandered free over miles of plains wandered unchecked through that house; there was no indoors or outdoors any more.

And on the wall of the room in which I stood, someone had proudly written his regiment's name, The 156th Wurtemburgers. It was written in chalk; and another man had come and had written two words before it and had recorded the name of his own regiment too. And the writing remains after these two men are gone, and the lonely house is silent but for the wind

and the things that creak as it blows, the only message of this deserted house, is this mighty record, this rare line of history, ill-written: “Lost by the 156th Wurtemburgers, retaken by the Bermondsey Butterflies.”

Two men wrote that sentence between them. And, as with Homer, no one knows who they were. And; like Homer, their words were epic.

On An Old Battle-Field

I entered an old battle-field through a garden gate, a pale green gate by the. Bapaume-Arras road. The cheerful green attracted me in the deeps of the desolation as an emerald might in a dust-bin. I entered through that homely garden gate, it had no hinges, no pillars, it lolled on a heap of stone: I came to it from the road; this alone was not battle-field; the road alone was made and tended and kept; all the rest was battle-field, as far as the eye could see. Over a large whitish heap lay a Virginia creeper, turning a dull crimson. And the presence of this creeper mourning there in the waste showed unmistakably that the heap had been a house. All the living things were gone that had called this white heap Home: the father would be fighting, somewhere; the children would have fled, if there had been time; the dog would have gone with them, or perhaps, if there was not time, he served other masters; the cat would have made a lair for herself and stalked mice at night through the trenches. All the live things that we ever consider were gone; the creeper alone remained, the only mourner, clinging to fallen stones that had supported it once.

And I knew by its presence here there had been a house. And by the texture or composition of the ruin all round I saw that a village had stood there. There are calamities one does not contemplate, when one thinks of time and change. Death, passing away, even ruin, are all the human lot; but one contemplates ruin as brought by kindly ages, coming slowly at last, with lichen and ivy and moss, its harsher aspects all hidden with green, coming with dignity and in due season. Thus our works should pass away; our worst fears contemplated no more than this.

But here in a single day, perhaps in a moment with one discharge from a battery, all the little things that one family cared for, their house, their garden; and the garden paths, and then the village and the road through the village, and the old landmarks that the old people remembered, and countless treasured things, were all turned into rubbish.

And these things that one did not contemplate, have happened for hundreds of miles, with such disaster vast plains and hills are covered, because of the German war.

Deep wells, old cellars, battered trenches and dug-outs, lie in the rubbish and weeds under the intricate wreckage of peace and war. It will be a bad

place years hence for wanderers lost at night.

When the village went, trenches came; and, in the same storm that had crumbled the village, the trenches withered too; shells still thump on to the north, but peace and war alike have deserted the village. Grass has begun to return over torn earth on edges of trenches. Abundant wire rusts away by its twisted stakes of steel. Not a path of old, not a lane nor a doorway there, but is barred and cut off by wire; and the wire in its turn has been cut by shells and lies in ungathered swathes. A pair of wheels moulders amongst weeds, and may be of peace or of war, it is too broken down for anyone to say. A great bar of iron lies cracked across as though one of the elder giants had handled it carelessly. Another mound near by, with an old green beam sticking out of it, was also once a house. A trench runs by it. A German bomb with its wooden handle, some bottles, a bucket, a petrol tin and some bricks and stones, lie in the trench. A young elder tree grows amongst them. And over all the ruin and rubbish Nature, with all her wealth and luxury, comes back to her old inheritance, holding again the land that she held so long, before the houses came.

A garden gate of iron has been flung across a wall. Then a deep cellar into which a whole house seems to have slanted down. In the midst of all this is an orchard. A huge shell has uprooted, but not killed, an apple-tree; another apple-tree stands stone dead on the edge of a crater: most of the trees are dead. British aeroplanes drone over continually. A great gun goes by towards Bapaume, dragged by a slow engine with caterpillar wheels. The gun is all blotched green and yellow. Four or five men are seated on the huge barrel alone.

Dark old steps near the orchard run down into a dug-out, with a cartridge-case tied to a piece of wood beside it to beat when the gas came. A telephone wire lies listlessly by the opening. A patch of Michaelmas daisies, deep mauve and pale mauve, and a bright yellow flower beside them, show where a garden used to stand near by. Above the dug-out a patch of jagged earth shows in three clear layers under the weeds: four inches of grey road metal, imported, for all this country is chalk and clay; two inches of flint below it, and under that an inch of a bright red stone. We are looking then at a road — a road through a village trodden by men and women, and the hooves of horses and familiar modern things, a road so buried, so shattered, so overgrown, showing by chance an edge in the midst of the wilderness, that I could seem rather to have discovered the track of the Dinosaur in

prehistoric clays than the highway, of a little village that only five years ago was full of human faults and joys and songs and tiny tears. Down that road before the plans, of the Kaiser began to fumble with the earth, down that road — but it is useless to look back, we are too far away from five years ago, too far away from thousands of ordinary things, that never seemed as though they would ever peer at us over chasms of time, out of another age, utterly far off, irrevocably removed from our ways and days. They are gone, those times, gone like the Dinosaur; gone with bows and arrows and the old knightlier days. No splendour marks their sunset where I sit, no dignity of houses, or derelict engines of war, mined all equally are scattered dirtily in the mud, and common weeds overpower them; it is not ruin but rubbish that covers the ground here and spreads its untidy flood for hundreds and hundreds of miles.

A band plays in Arras, to the north and east the shells go thumping on.

The very origins of things are in doubt, so much is jumbled together. It is as hard to make out just where the trenches ran, and which was No-Man's-Land, as it is to tell the houses from garden and orchard and road: the rubbish covers all. It is as though the ancient forces of Chaos had come back from the abyss to fight against order and man, and Chaos had won. So lies this village of France.

As I left it a rat, with something in its mouth, holding its head high, ran right across the village.

The Real Thing

Once at manoeuvres as the Prussian Crown Prince charged at the head of his regiment, as sabres gleamed, plumes streamed, and hooves thundered behind him, he is reported to have said to one that galloped near him: “Ah, if only this were the real thing!”

One need not doubt that the report is true. So a young man might feel as he led his regiment of cavalry, for the scene would fire the blood; all those young men and fine uniforms and good horses, all coming on behind, everything streaming that could float on the air, everything jingling then which could ever make a sound, a bright sky no doubt over the uniforms, a good fresh wind for men and horses to gulp; and behind, the clinking and jingling, the long roll of hooves thundering. Such a scene might well stir emotions to sigh for the splendours of battle.

This is one side of war. Mutilation and death are another; misery, cold and dirt; pain, and the intense loneliness of men left behind by armies, with much to think of; no hope, and a day or two to live. But we understand that glory covers that.

There is yet a third side.

I came to Albert when the fight was far from it: only at night you saw any signs of war, when clouds flashed now and then and curious rockets peered. Albert robbed of peace was deserted even by war.

I will not say that Albert was devastated or desolate, for these long words have different interpretations and may easily be exaggerated. A German agent might say to you, “Devastated is rather a strong word, and desolate is a matter of opinion.” And so you might never know what Albert is like.

I will tell you what I saw.

Albert was a large town. I will not write of all of it.

I sat down near a railway bridge at the edge of the town; I think I was near the station; and small houses had stood there with little gardens; such as porters and other railway folk would have lived in. I sat down on the railway and looked at one of these houses, for it had clearly been a house. It was at the back of it that most remained, in what must have been a garden. A girder torn up like a pack of cards lay on the leg of a table amongst a brick wall by an apple-tree.

Lower down in the heap was the frame-work of a large four-poster bed; through it all a vine came up quite green and still alive; and at the edge of the heap lay a doll's green pram. Small though the house had been there was evidence in that heap of some prosperity in more than one generation. For the four-poster bed had been a fine one, good work in sound old timber, before the bits in the girder had driven it into the wall; and the green pram must have been the dowry of no ordinary, doll, but one with the best yellow curls whose blue eyes could move. One blue columbine close by mourned alone for the garden.

The wall and the vine and the bed and the girder lay in an orchard, and some of the apple-trees were standing yet, though the orchard had been terribly wrecked by shell fire. All that still stood were dead. Some stood upon the very edge of craters; their leaves and twigs and bark had been stripped by one blast in a moment; and they had tottered, with stunted, black, gesticulating branches; and so they stood today.

The curls of a mattress lay on the ground, clipped once from a horse's mane.

After looking for some while across the orchard one suddenly noticed that the cathedral had stood on the other side. It was draped, when we saw it closer, as with a huge grey cloak, the lead of its roof having come down and covered it.

Near the house of that petted doll (as I came to think of it) a road ran by on the other side of the railway. Great shells had dropped along it with terrible regularity. You could imagine Death striding down it with exact five-yard paces, on his own day, claiming his own. As I stood on the road something whispered behind me; and I saw, stirring round with the wind, in one of those footsteps of Death, a double page of a book open at Chapter II: and Chapter II was headed with the proverb, "Un Malheur Ne Vient Jamais Seul;" Misfortunes never come singly! And on that dreadful road, with shell-holes every five yards as far as the eye could see, and fiat beyond it the whole city in ruin. What harmless girl or old man had been reading that dreadful prophecy when the Germans came down upon Albert and involved it, and themselves, and that book, all except those two pages, in such multiplication of ruin?

Surely, indeed, there is a third side to war: for what had the doll done, that used to have a green pram, to deserve to share thus in the fall and punishment of an Emperor?

A Garden Of Arras

As I walked through Arras from the Spanish gate, gardens flashed as I went, one by one, through the houses.

I stepped in over the window-sill of one of the houses, attracted by the gleam of a garden dimly beyond: and went through the empty house, empty of people, empty of furniture, empty of plaster, and entered the garden through an empty doorway.

When I came near it seemed less like a garden. At first it had almost seemed to beckon to passers-by in the street, so rare are gardens now in this part of France, that it seemed to have more than a garden's share of mystery, all in the silence there at the back of the silent house; but when one entered it some of the mystery went, and seemed to hide in a further part of the garden amongst wild shrubs and innumerable weeds.

British aeroplanes frequently roared over, disturbing the congregation of Arras Cathedral a few hundred yards away, who rose cawing and wheeled over the garden; for only jackdaws come to Arras Cathedral now, besides a few pigeons.

Unkempt beside me a bamboo flourished wildly, having no need of man. On the other side of the small wild track that had been the garden path the skeletons of hothouses stood, surrounded by nettles; their pipes lay all about, shattered and riddled through.

Branches of rose break up through the myriad nettles, but only to be seized and choked by columbine. A late moth looks for flowers not quite in vain. It hovers on wing-beats that are invisibly swift by its lonely autumn flower, then darts away over the desolation which is no desolation to a moth: man has destroyed man; nature comes back; it is well: that must be the brief philosophy of myriads of tiny things whose way of life one seldom considered before; now that man's cities are down, now that ruin and misery confront us whichever way we turn, one notices more the small things that are left.

One of the greenhouses is almost all gone, a tumbled mass that might be a piece of Babylon, if archæologists should come to study it. But it is too sad to study, too untidy to have any interest, and, alas, too common: there are hundreds of miles of this.

The other greenhouse, a sad, ungainly skeleton, is possessed by grass and weeds. On the raised centre many flower-pots were neatly arranged once: they stand in orderly lines, but each separate one is broken: none contain flowers any more, but only grass. And the glass of the greenhouse lies there in showers, all grey. No one has tidied anything up there for years.

A meadow-sweet had come into that greenhouse and dwelt there in that abode of fine tropical flowers, and one night an elder tree had entered and is now as high as the house, and at the end of the greenhouse grass has come in like a wave; for change and disaster are far-reaching and are only mirrored here. This desolate garden and its mined house are a part of hundreds of thousands such, or millions. Mathematics will give you no picture of what France has suffered. If I tell you what one garden is like, one village, one house, one cathedral, after the German war has swept by, and if you read my words, I may help you perhaps to imagine more easily what France has suffered than if I spoke of millions. I speak of one garden in Arras; and you might walk from there, south by east for weeks, and find no garden that has suffered less.

It is all weeds and elders. An apple-tree rises out of a mass of nettles, but it is quite dead. Wild rose-trees show here and there, or roses that have ran wild like the cats of No-Man's-Land: And once I saw a rose-bush that had been planted in a pot and still grew there, as though it still remembered man, but the flower-pot was shattered, like all the pots in that garden, and the rose grew wild as any in any hedge.

The ivy alone grows on over a mighty wall, and seems to care not. The ivy alone seems not to mourn, but to have added the last four years to its growth as though they were ordinary years. That corner of the wall alone whispers not of disaster, it only seems to tell of the passing of years, which makes the ivy strong, and for which in peace as in war there is no cure. All the rest speaks of war, of war that comes to gardens, without banners or trumpets or splendour, and roots up everything, and turns round and smashes the house, and leaves it all desolate, and forgets and goes away. And when the histories of the war are written, attacks and counter-attacks and the doom of Emperors, who will remember that garden?

Saddest of all, as it seemed to me watching the garden paths, were spiders' webs that had been spun across them, so grey and stout and strong, fastened from weed to weed, with the spiders in their midst sitting in obvious ownership. You knew then as you looked at those webs across all

the paths in the garden that any that you might fancy walking the small paths still, were but grey ghosts gone from thence, no more than dreams, hopes and imaginings, something altogether weaker than spiders webs.

And the old wall of the garden that divides it from its neighbour, of solid stone and brick, over fifteen feet high, it is that mighty old wall that held the romance of the garden. I do not tell the tale of that garden of Arras, for that is conjecture, and I only tell what I saw, in order that someone perhaps in some far country may know what happened in thousands and thousands of gardens because an Emperor sighed, and longed for the splendour of war. The tale is but conjecture, yet all the romance is there; for picture a wall over fifteen feet high built as they built long ago, standing for all those ages between two gardens. For would not the temptation arise to peer over the wall if a young man heard, perhaps songs, one evening the other side? And at first he would have some pretext and afterwards none at all, and the pretext would vary wonderfully little with the generations, while the ivy went on growing thicker and thicker. The thought might come of climbing the wall altogether and down the other side, and it might seem too daring and be utterly put away. And then one day, some wonderful summer evening, the west all red and a new moon in the sky, far voices heard clearly and white mists rising, one wonderful summer day, back would come that thought to climb the great old wall and go down the other side. Why not go in next door from the street, you might say. That would be different, that would be calling; that would mean ceremony, black hats, and awkward new gloves, constrained talk and little scope for romance. It would all be the fault of the wall.

With what diffidence, as the generations passed, would each first peep over the wall be undertaken. In some years it would be scaled from one side, in some ages from the other. What a barrier that old red wall would have seemed! How new the adventure would have seemed in each age to those that dared it, and how old to the wall! And in all those years the elders never made a door, but kept that huge and haughty separation. And the ivy quietly grew greener. And then one day a shell came from the east, and, in a moment, without plan or diffidence or pretext, tumbled away some yards of the proud old wall, and the two gardens were divided no longer: but there was no one to walk in them any more.

Wistfully round the edge of the huge breach in the wall, a Michaelmas daisy peered into the garden, in whose mined paths I stood.

After Hell

He heard an English voice shouting, “Paiper! Paiper!” No mere spelling of the word will give the intonation. It was the voice of English towns he heard again. The very voice of London in the morning. It seemed like magic, or like some wonderfully vivid dream.

He was only a hundred miles or so from England; it was not very long since he had been there; yet what he heard seemed like an enchanted dream, because only the day before he had been in the trenches.

They had been twelve days in the trenches and had marched out at evening. They had marched five miles and were among tin huts in quite a different world. Through the doorways of the huts green grass could be seen and the sun was shining on it. It was morning. Everything was strangely different. You saw more faces smiling. Men were not so calm as they had been during the last twelve days, the last six especially: someone was kicking a football at somebody else’s hut and there was excitement about it.

Guns were still firing: but they thought of death now as one who walked on the other side of the hills, no longer as a neighbour, as one who might drop in at any moment, and sometime did, while they were taking tea. It was not that they had been afraid of him, but the strain of expectancy was over; and that strain being suddenly gone in a single night, they all had a need, whether they knew it or not, of something to take its place, so the football loomed very large.

It was morning and he had slept long. The guns that grew active at dawn had not woke him; in those twelve days they had grown too familiar, but he woke wide when he heard the young English soldier with a bundle of three-days-old papers under his arm calling “Paiper, paiper!” — bringing to that strange camp the voice of the English towns. He woke wide at that wonder; and saw the sun shining cheerily, on desolation with a tinge of green in it, which even by itself rejoiced him on that morning after those twelve days amongst mud, looking at mud, surrounded by mud, protected by mud, sharing with mud the liability to be suddenly blown high and to come down in a shower on other men’s helmets and coats.

He wondered if Dante when he came up from Hell heard anyone calling amongst the Verdure, in sunlight, any familiar call such as merchants use, some trivial song or cry of his native city.

A Happy Valley

“The enemy attacked the Happy Valley.” I read these words in a paper at the time of the taking of Albert, for the second time, by our troops. And the words brought back Albert to me like a spell, Albert at the end of the mighty Bapaume-Albert road, that pathway Of Mars down which he had stalked so tremendously through his garden, the wide waste battlefields of the Somme. The words brought back Albert at the end of that road in the sunset and the cathedral seen against the west, and the gilded Virgin half cast down, but incapable of losing dignity, and evening coming down over the marshes. They brought it back like a spell. Like two spells rather, that some magician had mixed. Picture some magician of old in his sombre wonderful, chamber wishing dreams to transport him far off to delectable valleys. He sits him down and writes out a spell on parchment, slowly and with effort of aged memory, though he remembered it easily once. The shadows of crocodiles and antique gods flicker on walls and ceiling from a gusty flame as he writes; and in the end he writes the spell out wrongly and mixes up with the valleys where he would rest dark bits of the regions of Hell. So one sees Albert again and its Happy Valley.

I do not know which the Happy Valley is, for so many little valleys run in and out about Albert; and with a little effort of imagination, having only seen them full of the ruin of war, one can fancy any of them being once named happy. Yet one there is away to the east of Albert, which even up to last autumn seemed able to bear this name, so secluded it was in that awful garden of Mars; a tiny valley running into the wood of Bécourt. A few yards, higher up and all was desolation, a little further along a lonely road and you saw Albert mourning over irreparable vistas of ruin and wasted fields; but the little valley ran into the wood of Bécourt and sheltered there, and there you saw scarcely any signs of war. It might almost have been an English valley, by the side of an English wood. The soil was the same brown clay that you see in the south Of England above the downs and the chalk; the wood was a hazel wood, such as grow in England, thinned a good deal, as English hazels are, but with several tall trees still growing; and plants were there and late flowers, such as grow in Surrey and Kent. And at the end of the valley, just in the shadow of that familiar homely wood, a hundred British officers rest for ever.

As the world is today perhaps that obscure spot, as fittingly as any, might be named the Happy Valley.

In Bethune

Under all ruins is history, as every tourist knows. Indeed, the dust that gathers above the ruin of cities may be said to be the cover of the most wonderful of the picture-books of Time, those secret books into which we sometimes peep. We turn no more, perhaps, than the corner of a single page in our prying, but we catch a glimpse there of things so gorgeous, in the book that we are not meant to see, that it is worth while to travel to far countries, whoever can, to see one of those books, and where the edges are turned up a little to catch sight of those strange winged bulls and mysterious kings and lion-headed gods that were not meant for us. And out of the glimpses, one catches from odd comers of those volumes of Time, where old centuries hide, one builds up part by guesses, part by fancy mixed with but little knowledge, a tale or theory of how men and women lived in unknown ages in the faith of forgotten gods.

Such a people lived in Timgad and left it probably about the time that waning Rome began to call home her outposts. Long after the citizens left the city stood on that high plateau in Africa, teaching shepherd Arabs what Rome had been: even to-day its great arches and parts of its temples stand: its paved streets are still grooved clearly with the wheel-ruts of chariots, and beaten down on each side of the centre by the pairs of horses that drew them two thousand years ago. When all the clatter had died away Timgad stood there in silence.

At Pompeii, city and citizens ended together. Pompeii did not mourn among strangers, a city without a people: but was buried at once, closed like an ancient book.

I doubt if anyone knows why its gods deserted Luxor, or Luxor lost faith in its gods, or in itself; conquest from over the desert or down the Nile, I suppose, or corruption within. Who knows? But one day I saw a woman come out from the back of her house and empty a basket full of dust and rubbish right into the temple at Luxor, where a dark green god is seated, three times the size of a man, buried as high as his waist. I suppose that what I saw had been happening off and on pretty well every morning for the last four thousand years. Safe under the dust that that woman threw, and the women that lived before her, Time hid his secrets.

And then I have seen the edges of stones in deserts that might or might not have been cities: they had fallen so long that you could hardly say.

At all these cities, whether disaster met them, and ruin came suddenly on to crowded streets; or whether they passed slowly out of fashion, and grew quieter year by year while the jackals drew nearer and nearer; at all these cities one can look with interest and not be saddened by the faintest sorrow — for anything that happened to such a different people so very long ago. Ram-headed gods, although their horns be broken and all their worshippers gone; armies whose elephants have turned against them; kings whose ancestors have eclipsed their faces in heaven and left them helpless against the onslaught of the stars; not a tear is given for one of these to-day.

But when in ruins as complete as Pompeii, as desolate as Timgad amongst its African hills, you see the remnant of a pack of cards lying with what remains of the stock of a draper's shop; and the front part of the shop and the snug room at the back gape side by side together in equal, misery, as though there had never been a barrier between the counter with its wares and the good mahogany table with its decanters; then in the rustling of papers that blow with dust along long-desolate floors one hears the whisper of Disaster, saying, "See; I have come." For under plaster shaken down by calamity, and red dust that once was bricks, it is our own age that is lying; and the little things that lie about the floors are relics of the twentieth century. Therefore in the streets of Bethune the wistful appeal that is in all things lost far off and utterly passed away cries out with an insistence that is never felt in the older fallen cities. No doubt to future times the age that lies under plaster in Bethune, with thin, bare laths standing over it, will appear an age of glory; and yet to thousands that went one day from its streets, leaving all manner of small things behind, it may well have been an age full of far other promises, no less golden to them, no less magical even, though too little to stir the pen of History, busy with batteries and imperial dooms. So that to these, whatever others may write, the twentieth-century will not be the age of strategy, but will only seem to have been those fourteen lost quiet summers whose fruits lie under the plaster.

That layer of plaster and brick-dust lies on the age that has gone, as final, as fatal, as the layer of flints that covers the top of the chalk and marks the end of an epoch and some unknown geologic catastrophe.

It is only by the little things in Bethune, lying where they were left, that one can trace at all what kind of house each was, or guess at the people who

dwelt in it. It is only by a potato growing where Pavement was, and flowering vigorously under a vacant window, that one can guess that the battered, house beside it was once a fruiterer's shop, whence the potato rolled away when man fell on evil days, and found the street, no longer harsh and unfriendly; but soft and fertile like the primal waste, and took root and throve there as its forbears throve before it in another continent before the coming of man.

Across the street, in the dust of a stricken house, the implements of his trade show where a carpenter lived when disaster came so suddenly, quite good tools, some still upon shelves, some amongst broken things that lie all over the floor. And further along the street in which these things are someone has put up a great iron shutter that was to protect his shop. It has a graceful border of painted, irises all the way up each side. It might have been a jeweller that would have had such a shutter. The shutter alone remains standing straight upright, and the whole shop is gone.

And just here the shaken street ends and all the streets end together. The rest is a mound of white stones and pieces of bricks with low, leaning walls surrounding it, and the halves of hollow houses; and eyeing it round a comer, one old tower of the cathedral, as though still gazing over its congregation of houses, a mined, melancholy watcher. Over the bricks lie tracks, but no more streets. It is about the middle of the town, a hawk goes over, calling as though he flew over the waste, and as though the waste were his. The breeze that carries him opens old shutters and flaps them to again. Old, useless hinges moan; wall-paper whispers. Three French soldiers trying to find their homes walk over the bricks and groundsel.

It is the Abomination of Desolation, not seen by prophecy far off in some fabulous future, nor remembered from terrible ages by the aid of papyrus and stone, but fallen on our own century, on the homes of folk like ourselves: common things that we knew are become the relics of bygone days. It is our own time that has ended in blood and broken bricks.

In An Old Drawing-Room

There was one house with a roof on it in Peronne. And there an officer came by moonlight on his way back from leave. He was looking for his battalion which had moved and was now somewhere in the desolation out in front of Peronne, or else was marching there — no one quite knew. Someone said he had seen it marching through Tincourt; the R.T.O. said Brie. Those who did not know were always ready to help, they made suggestions and even pulled out maps. Why should they not? They were giving away no secret, because they did not know, and so they followed a soldier's natural inclination to give all the help they could to another soldier. Therefore they offered their suggestions like old friends. They had never met before, might never meet again; but La France introduces you, and five minute acquaintance in a place like Peronne, where things may change so profoundly in one night, and where all is so tense by the strange background of ruin that little portions of time seem very valuable, five minutes there seem quite a long time. And so they are, for what may not happen in five minutes any day now in France. Five minutes may be a page of history, a chapter even, perhaps a volume. Little children with inky fingers years hence may sit for a whole hour trying to learn up and remember just what happened during five minutes in France some time about now. These are just reflections such as pass through the mind in the moonlight among vast ruins and are at once forgotten.

Those that knew where the battalion was that the wandering officer looked for were not many; these were reserved and spoke like one that has a murder on his conscience, not freely and openly: for of one thing no one speaks in France, and that is the exact position of a unit. One may wave one's hand vaguely eastwards and say "Over there,", but to name a village and the people that occupy it is to offend against the silence that in these days broods over France, the solemn hush befitting so vast a tragedy.

And in the end it seemed better to that officer to obey the R.T.O. and to go by his train to Brie that left in the morning, and that question settled, there remained only food and sleep.

Down in the basement of the big house with a roof there was a kitchen, in fact there was everything that a house should have; and the more that one saw of simple household things, tables, chairs, the fire in the kitchen, pieces

of carpet, floors, ceilings, and even windows, the more one wondered; it did not seem natural in Peronne.

Picture to yourself a fine drawing-room with high ornamental walls and all the air about it of dignity, peace and ease, that were so recently gone; only just, as it might have been, stepped through the double doorway; skirts, as it were, of ladies only just trailed out of sight; and then turn in fancy to that great town streaming with moonlight, full of the mystery that moonlight always brings, but without the light of it; all black, dark as caverns of earth where no light ever came, blacker for the moonlight than if no moon were there; sombre, mourning and accursed, each house in the great streets sheltering darkness amongst its windowless walls; as though it nursed disaster, having no other children left, and would not let the moon peer in on its grief or see the monstrous orphan that it fondled.

In the old drawing-room with twenty others, the wandering officer lay down to sleep on the floor, and thought of old wars that came to the cities of France a long while ago. To just such houses as this, he thought, men must have come before and gone on next day to fight in other centuries; it seemed to him that it must have been more romantic then. Who knows?

He had a bit of carpet to lie on. A few more officers came in in the early part of the night, and talked a little and lay down. A few candles were stuck on tables here and there. Midnight would have struck from the towers had any clock been left to strike in Peronne. Still talk went on in low voices here and there. The candles burned low and were fewer. Big shadows floated along those old high walls. Then the talk ceased and everyone was still: nothing stirred but the shadows. An officer muttered in sleep of things far thence, and was silent. Far away shells thumped faintly. The shadows, left to themselves, went round and round the room, searching in every corner for something that was lost. Over walls and ceiling they went and could not find it. The last candle was failing. It flared and guttered. The shadows raced over the room from comer to corner. Lost, and they could not find it. They hurried desperately in those last few moments. Great shadows searching for some little thing. In the smallest nook they sought for it. Then the last candle died. As the flame went up with the smoke from the fallen wick all the great shadows turned and mournfully trailed away.

The Homes Of Arras

As you come to Arras by the western road, by the red ramparts and the Spanish gate, Arras looks like a king. With such a dignity as clings to the ancient gateway so might a king be crowned; with such a sweep of dull red as the old ramparts show, so might he be robed; but a dead king with crowned skull. For the ways of Arras are empty but for brown soldiers, and her houses are bare as bones.

Arras sleeps profoundly, roofless, windowless, carpetless; Arras sleeps as a skeleton sleeps, with all the dignity of former days about it, but the life that stirs in its streets is not the old city's life, the old city is murdered. I came to Arras and went down a street, and saw back gardens glinting through the bare ribs of the houses. Garden after garden shone, so far as it could, though it was in October and after four years of war; but what was left of those gardens shining there in the sun was like sad faces trying to smile after many disasters.

I came to a great wall that no shell had breached. A cascade of scarlet creeper poured over it, as though on the other side some serene garden grew, where no disaster came, tended by girls who had never heard of war, walking untrodden paths. It was not so. But one's fancy, weary of ruin, readily turns to such scenes wherever facts are hidden, though but by a tottering wall, led by a few bright leaves or the glimpse of a flower.

But not for any fancy of mine must you picture ruin any more as something graced with splendour, or as it were an argosy reaching the shores of our day laden with grandeur and dignity out of antiquity. Ruin to-day is not covered with ivy, and has no curious architecture or strange secrets of history, and is not beautiful or romantic at all. It has no tale to tell of old civilizations, not otherwise known, told of by few grey stones. Ruin to-day is destruction and sorrow and debt and loss, come down untidily upon modern homes and cutting off ordinary generations, smashing the implements of familiar trades and making common avocations obsolete. It is no longer the guardian and the chronicle of ages that we should otherwise forget: ruin to-day is an age heaped up in rubble around us before it has ceased to be still green in our memory. Quite ordinary wardrobes in unseemly attitudes gape out from bedrooms whose front walls are gone, in houses whose most inner design shows unconcealed to the cold gaze of the

street. The rooms have neither mystery nor adornment. Burst mattresses loll down from bedraggled beds. No one has come to tidy them up for years. And roofs have slanted down as low as the first floor.

I saw a green door ajar in an upper room: the whole of the front wall of the house was gone: the door partly opened oddly on to a little staircase, whose steps one could just see, that one wondered whither it went. The door seemed to beckon and beckon to some lost room, but if one could ever have got there, up through that shattered house, and if the steps of that little staircase would bear, so that one came to, the room that is hidden away at the top, yet there could only be silence and spiders there, and broken plaster and the dust of calamity; it is only to memories that the green door beckons; nothing remains.

And some day they may come to Arras to see the romance of war, to see where the shells struck and to pick up pieces of iron. It is not this that is romantic, not Mars, but poor, limping Peace. It is what is left that appeals to you, with pathos and infinite charm; little desolate gardens that no one has tended for years, wall-paper left in forlorn rooms when all else is Scattered, old toys buried in rubbish, old steps untrodden on inaccessible landings: it is what is left that appeals to you, what remains of old peaceful things. The great guns throb on, all round is the panoply of war, if panoply be the right word for this vast disaster that is known to Arras as innumerable separate sorrows; but it is not to this great event that-the sympathy turns in Arras, nor to its thunder and show, nor the trappings of it, guns lorries, and fragments of shells: it is to the voiceless, deserted inanimate things, so greatly wronged, that all the heart goes out: floors fallen in festoons, windows that seem to be wailing, roofs as though crazed with grief and then petrified in their craziness; railings, lamp-posts, sticks, all hit, nothing spared by that frenzied iron: the very earth clawed and-torn: it is what is left that appeals to you.

As I went from Arras I passed by a grey, gaunt shape, the ghost of a railway station standing in the wilderness haunting a waste of weeds, and mourning, as it seemed, over rusted railway lines lying idle and purposeless as though leading nowhere, as though all roads had ceased, and all lands were deserted, and all travellers dead: sorrowful and lonely that ghostly shape stood dumb in the desolation among houses whose doors were shut and their windows broken. And in all that stricken assembly no voice spoke

but the sound of iron tapping on broken things, which was dumb awhile when the wind dropped. The wind rose and it tapped again.

TALES OF THREE HEMISPHERES



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THE LAST DREAM OF BWONA KHUBLA

From steaming lowlands down by the equator, where monstrous orchids blow, where beetles big as mice sit on the tent-ropes, and fireflies glide about by night like little moving stars, the travelers went three days through forests of cactus till they came to the open plains where the oryx are.

And glad they were when they came to the water-hole, where only one white man had gone before, which the natives know as the camp of Bwona Khubla, and found the water there.

It lies three days from the nearest other water, and when Bwona Khubla had gone there three years ago, what with malaria with which he was shaking all over, and what with disgust at finding the water-hole dry, he had decided to die there, and in that part of the world such decisions are always fatal. In any case he was overdue to die, but hitherto his amazing resolution, and that terrible strength of character that so astounded his porters, had kept him alive and moved his safari on.

He had had a name no doubt, some common name such as hangs as likely as not over scores of shops in London; but that had gone long ago, and nothing identified his memory now to distinguish it from the memories of all the other dead but "Bwona Khubla," the name the Kikuyus gave him.

There is not doubt that he was a fearful man, a man that was dreaded still for his personal force when his arm was no longer able to lift the kiboko, when all his men knew he was dying, and to this day though he is dead.

Though his temper was embittered by malaria and the equatorial sun, nothing impaired his will, which remained a compulsive force to the very last, impressing itself upon all, and after the last, from what the Kikuyus say. The country must have had powerful laws that drove Bwona Khubla out, whatever country it was.

On the morning of the day that they were to come to the camp of Bwona Khubla all the porters came to the travelers' tents asking for dow. Dow is the white man's medicine, that cures all evils; the nastier it tastes, the better it is. They wanted down this morning to keep away devils, for they were near the place where Bwona Khubla died.

The travelers gave them quinine.

By sunset the came to Campini Bwona Khubla and found water there. Had they not found water many of them must have died, yet none felt any

gratitude to the place, it seemed too ominous, too full of doom, too much harassed almost by unseen, irresistible things.

And all the natives came again for dow as soon as the tents were pitched, to protect them from the last dreams of Bwona Khubla, which they say had stayed behind when the last safari left taking Bwona Khubla's body back to the edge of civilization to show to the white men there that they had not killed him, for the white men might not know that they durst not kill Bwona Khubla.

And the travelers gave them more quinine, so much being bad for the nerves, and that night by the camp-fires there was no pleasant talk; all talking at once of meat they had eaten and cattle that each one owned, but a gloomy silence hung by every fire and the little canvas shelters. They told the white men that Bwona Khubla's city, of which he had thought at the last (and where the natives believed he was once a king), of which he had raved till the loneliness rang with his raving, had settled down all about them; and they were afraid, for it was so strange a city, and wanted more dow. And the two travelers gave them more quinine, for they saw real fear in their faces, and knew they might run away and leave them alone in that place, that they, too, had come to fear with an almost equal dread, though they knew not why. And as the night wore on their feeling of boding deepened, although they had shared three bottles or so of champagne that they meant to keep for days when they killed a lion.

This is the story that each of those two men tell, and which their porters corroborate, but then a Kikuyu will always say whatever he thinks is expected of him.

The travelers were both in bed and trying to sleep but not able to do so because of an ominous feeling. That mournfullest of all the cries of the wild, the hyæna like a damned soul lamenting, strangely enough had ceased. The night wore on to the hour when Bwona Khubla had died three or four years ago, dreaming and raving of "his city"; and in the hush a sound softly arose, like a wind at first, then like the roar of beasts, then unmistakably the sound of motors — motors and motor busses.

And then they saw, clearly and unmistakably they say, in that lonely desolation where the equator comes up out of the forest and climbs over jagged hills, — they say they saw London.

There could have been no moon that night, but they say there was a multitude of stars. Mists had come rolling up at evening about the pinnacles

of unexplored red peaks that clustered round the camp. But they say the mist must have cleared later on; at any rate they swear they could see London, see it and hear the roar of it. Both say they saw it not as they knew it at all, not debased by hundreds of thousands of lying advertisements, but transfigured, all its houses magnificent, its chimneys rising grandly into pinnacles, its vast squares full of the most gorgeous trees, transfigured and yet London.

Its windows were warm and happy, shining at night, the lamps in their long rows welcomed you, the public-houses were gracious jovial places; yet it was London.

They could smell the smells of London, hear London songs, and yet it was never the London that they knew; it was as though they had looked on some strange woman's face with the eyes of her lover. For of all the towns of the earth or cities of song; of all the spots there be, unhallowed or hallowed, it seemed to those two men then that the city they saw was of all places the most to be desired by far. They say a barrel organ played quite near them, they say a coster was singing, they admit that he was singing out of tune, they admit a cockney accent, and yet they say that that song had in it something that no earthly song had ever had before, and both men say that they would have wept but that there was a feeling about their heartstrings that was far too deep for tears. They believe that the longing of this masterful man, that was able to rule a safari by raising a hand, had been so strong at the last that it had impressed itself deeply upon nature and had caused a mirage that may not fade wholly away, perhaps for several years.

I tried to establish by questions the truth or reverse of this story, but the two men's tempers had been so spoiled by Africa that they were not up to cross-examination. They would not even say if their camp-fires were still burning. They say that they saw the London lights all round them from eleven o'clock till midnight, they could hear London voices and the sound of the traffic clearly, and over all, a little misty perhaps, but unmistakably London, arose the great metropolis.

After midnight London quivered a little and grew more indistinct, the sound of the traffic began to dwindle away, voices seemed farther off, ceased altogether, and all was quiet once more where the mirage shimmered and faded, and a bull rhinoceros coming down through the stillness snorted, and watered at the Carlton Club.

HOW THE OFFICE OF POSTMAN FELL VACANT IN OTFORD-UNDER-THE-WOLD

The duties of postman at Otford-under-the-Wold carried Amuel Sleggins farther afield than the village, farther afield than the last house in the lane, right up to the big bare wold and the house where no one went, no one that is but the three grim men that dwelt there and the secretive wife of one, and, once a year when the queer green letter came, Amuel Sleggins the postman.

The green letter always came just as the leaves were turning, addressed to the eldest of the three grim men, with a wonderful Chinese stamp and the Otford post-mark, and Amuel Sleggins carried it up to the house.

He was not afraid to go, for he always took the letter, had done so for seven years, yet whenever summer began to draw to a close, Amuel Sleggins was ill at ease, and if there was a touch of autumn about shivered unduly so that all folk wondered.

And then one day a wind would blow from the East, and the wild geese would appear, having left the sea, flying high and crying strangely, and pass till they were no more than a thin black line in the sky like a magical stick flung up by a doer of magic, twisting and twirling away; and the leaves would turn on the trees and the mists be white on the marshes and the sun set large and red and autumn would step down quietly that night from the wold; and the next day the strange green letter would come from China.

His fear of the three grim men and that secretive woman and their lonely, secluded house, or else the cadaverous cold of the dying season, rather braced Amuel when the time was come and he would step out bolder upon the day that he feared than he had perhaps for weeks. He longed on that day for a letter for the last house in the lane, there he would dally and talk awhile and look on church-going faces before his last tramp over the lonely wold to end at the dreaded door of the queer grey house called wold-hut.

When he came to the door of wold-hut he would give the postman's knock as though he came on ordinary rounds to a house of every day, although no path led up to it, although the skins of weasels hung thickly from upper windows.

And scarcely had his postman's knock rung through the dark of the house when the eldest of the three grim men would always run to the door. O, what a face had he. There was more slyness in it than ever his beard

could hide. He would put out a gristly hand; and into it Amuel Sleggins would put the letter from China, and rejoice that his duty was done, and would turn and stride away. And the fields lit up before him, but, ominous, eager and low murmuring arose in the wold-hut.

For seven years this was so and no harm had come to Sleggins, seven times he had gone to wold-hut and as often come safely away; and then he needs must marry. Perhaps because she was young, perhaps because she was fair or because she had shapely ankles as she came one day through the marshes among the milkmaid flowers shoeless in spring. Less things than these have brought men to their ends and been the nooses with which Fate snared them running. With marriage curiosity entered his house, and one day as they walked with evening through the meadows, one summer evening, she asked him of wold-hut where he only went, and what the folks were like that no one else had seen. All this he told her; and then she asked him of the green letter from China, that came with autumn, and what the letter contained. He read to her all the rules of the Inland Revenue, he told her he did not know, that it was not right that he should know, he lectured her on the sin of inquisitiveness, he quoted Parson, and in the end she said that she must know. They argued concerning this for many days, days of the ending of summer, of shortening evenings, and as they argued autumn grew nearer and nearer and the green letter from China.

And at last he promised that when the green letter came he would take it as usual to the lonely house and then hide somewhere near and creep to the window at nightfall and hear what the grim folk said; perhaps they might read aloud the letter from China. And before he had time to repent of that promise a cold wind came one night and the woods turned golden, the plover went in bands at evening over the marshes, the year had turned, and there came the letter from China. Never before had Amuel felt such misgivings as he went his postman's rounds, never before had he so much feared the day that took him up to the wold and the lonely house, while snug by the fire his wife looked pleasurably forward to curiosity's gratification and hoped to have news ere nightfall that all the gossips of the village would envy. One consolation only had Amuel as he set out with a shiver, there was a letter that day for the last house in the lane. Long did he tarry there to look at their cheery faces, to hear the sound of their laughter — you did not hear laughter in wold-hut — and when the last topic had

been utterly talked out and no excuse for lingering remained he heaved a heavy sigh and plodded grimly away and so came late to wold-hut.

He gave his postman's knock on the shut oak door, heard it reverberate through the silent house, saw the grim elder man and his gristly hand, gave up the green letter from China, and strode away. There is a clump of trees growing all alone in the wold, desolate, mournful, by day, by night full of ill omen, far off from all other trees as wold-hut from other houses. Near it stands wold-hut. Not today did Amuel stride briskly on with all the new winds of autumn blowing cheerily past him till he saw the village before him and broke into song; but as soon as he was out of sight of the house he turned and stooping behind a fold of the ground ran back to the desolate wood. There he waited watching the evil house, just too far to hear voices. The sun was low already. He chose the window at which he meant to eavesdrop, a little barred one at the back, close to the ground. And then the pigeons came in; for a great distance there was no other wood, so numbers shelter there, though the clump is small and of so evil a look (if they notice that); the first one frightened Amuel, he felt that it might be a spirit escaped from torture in some dim parlour of the house that he watched, his nerves were strained and he feared foolish fears. Then he grew used to them and the sun set then and the aspect of everything altered and he felt strange fears again. Behind him was a hollow in the wold, he watched it darkening; and before him he saw the house through the trunks of the trees. He waited for them to light their lamps so that they could not see, when he would steal up softly and crouch by the little back window. But though every bird was home, though the night grew chilly as tombs, though a star was out, still there shone no yellow light from any window. Amuel waited and shuddered. He did not dare to move till they lit their lamps, they might be watching. The damp and the cold so strangely affected him that autumn evening and the remnants of sunset, the stars and the wold and the whole vault of the sky seemed like a hall that they had prepared for Fear. He began to feel a dread of prodigious things, and still no light shone in the evil house. It grew so dark that he decided to move and make his way to the window in spite of the stillness and though the house was dark. He rose and while standing arrested by pains that cramped his limbs, he heard the door swing open on the far side of the house. He had just time to hide behind the trunk of a pine when the three grim men approached him and the woman hobbled behind. Right to the ominous clump of trees they came as though

they loved their blackness, passed through within a yard or two of the postman and squatted down on their haunches in a ring in the hollow behind the trees. They lit a fire in the hollow and laid a kid on the fire and by the light of it Amuel saw brought forth from an untanned pouch the letter that came from China. The elder opened it with his gristly hand and intoning words that Amuel did not know, drew out from it a green powder and sprinkled it on the fire. At once a flame arose and a wonderful savour, the flames rose higher and flickered turning the trees all green; and Amuel saw the gods coming to snuff the savour. While the three grim men prostrated themselves by their fire, and the horrible woman that was the spouse of one, he saw the gods coming gauntly over the wold, beheld the gods of Old England hungrily snuffing the savour, Odin, Balder, and Thor, the gods of the ancient people, beheld them eye to eye clear and close in the twilight, and the office of postman fell vacant in Otford-under-the-Wold.

THE PRAYER OF BOOB AHEERA

In the harbour, between the liner and the palms, as the huge ship's passengers came up from dinner, at moonrise, each in his canoe, Ali Kareeb Ahash and Boob Aheera passed within knife thrust.

So urgent was the purpose of Ali Kareeb Ahash that he did not lean over as his enemy slid by, did not tarry then to settle that long account; but that Boob Aheera made no attempt to reach him was a source of wonder to Ali. He pondered it till the liner's electric lights shone far away behind him with one blaze and the canoe was near to his destination, and pondered it in vain, for all that the eastern subtlety of his mind was able to tell him clearly was that it was not like Boob Aheera to pass him like that.

That Boob Aheera could have dared to lay such a cause as his before the Diamond Idol Ali had not conceived, yet as he drew near to the golden shrine in the palms, that none that come by the great ships ever found, he began to see more clearly in his mind that this was where Boob had gone on that hot night. And when he beached his canoe his fears departed, giving place to the resignation with which he always viewed Destiny; for there on the white sea sand were the tracks of another canoe, the edges all fresh and ragged. Boob Aheera had been before him. Ali did not blame himself for being late, the thing had been planned before the beginning of time, by gods that knew their business; only his hate of Boob Aheera increased, his enemy against whom he had come to pray. And the more his hate increased the more clearly he saw him, until nothing else could be seen by the eye of his mind but the dark lean figure, the little lean legs, the grey beard and neat loin-cloth of Boob Aheera, his enemy.

That the Diamond Idol should have granted the prayers of such a one he did not as yet imagine, he hated him merely for his presumptuousness in approaching the shrine at all, for approaching it before him whose cause was righteous, for many an old past wrong, but most of all for the expression of his face and the general look of the man as he has swept by in his canoe with his double paddle going in the moonlight.

Ali pushed through the steaming vegetation. The place smelt of orchids. There is no track to the shrine though many go. If there were a track the white man would one day find it, and parties would row to see it whenever a liner came in; and photographs would appear in weekly papers with

accounts of it underneath by men who had never left London, and all the mystery would be gone away and there would be nothing novel in this story.

Ali had scarcely gone a hundred yards through cactus and creeper underneath the palms when he came to the golden shrine that nothing guards except the deeps of the forest, and found the Diamond Idol. The Diamond Idol is five inches high and its base a good inch square, and it has a greater lustre than those diamonds that Mr. Moses bought last year for his wife, when he offered her an earldom or the diamonds, and Jael his wife had answered, "Buy the diamonds and be just plain Mr. Fortescue."

Purer than those was its luster and carved as they carve not in Europe, and the men thereby are poor and held to be fearless — yet they do not sell that idol. And I may say here that if any one of my readers should ever come by ship to the winding harbour where the forts of the Portuguese crumble in infinite greenery, where the baobab stands like a corpse here and there in the palms, if he goes ashore where no one has any business to go, and where no one so far as I know has gone from a liner before (though it's little more than a mile or so from the pier), and if he finds a golden shrine, which is near enough to the shore, and a five-inch diamond in it carved in the shape of a god, it is better to leave it alone and get back safe to the ship than to sell that diamond idol for any price in the world.

Ali Kareeb Ahash went into the golden shrine, and when he raised his head from the seven obeisances that are the due of the idol, behold! it glowed with such a lustre as only it wears after answering recent prayer. No native of those parts mistakes the tone of the idol, they know its varying shades as a tracker knows blood; the moon was streaming in through the open door and Ali saw it clearly.

No one had been that night but Boob Aheera.

The fury of Ali rose and surged to his heart, he clutched his knife till the hilt of it bruised his hand, yet he did not utter the prayer that he had made ready about Boob Aheera's liver, for he saw that Boob Aheera's prayers were acceptable to the idol and knew that divine protection was over his enemy.

What Boob Aheera's prayer was he did not know, but he went back to the beach as fast as one can go through cacti and creepers that climb to the tops of the palms; and as fast as his canoe could carry him he went down the winding harbour, till the liner shone beside him as he passed, and he heard the sound of its band rise up and die, and he landed and came that

night into Boob Aheera's hut. And there he offered himself as his enemy's slave, and Boob Aheera's slave he is to this day, and his master has protection from the idol. And Ali rows to the liners and goes on board to sell rubies made of glass, and thin suits for the tropics and ivory napkin rings, and Manchester kimonos, and little lovely shells; and the passengers abuse him because of his prices; and yet they should not, for all the money cheated by Ali Kareeb Ahash goes to Boob Aheera, his master.

EAST AND WEST

It was dead of night and midwinter. A frightful wind was bringing sleet from the East. The long sere grasses were wailing. Two specks of light appeared on the desolate plain; a man in a hansom cab was driving alone in North China.

Alone with the driver and the dejected horse. The driver wore a good waterproof cape, and of course an oiled silk hat, but the man in the cab wore nothing but evening dress. He did not have the glass door down because the horse fell so frequently, the sleet had put his cigar out and it was too cold to sleep; the two lamps flared in the wind. By the uncertain light of a candle lamp that flickered inside the cab, a Manchu shepherd that saw the vehicle pass, where he watched his sheep on the plain in fear of the wolves, for the first time saw evening dress. And though he saw if dimly, and what he saw was wet, it was like a backward glance of a thousand years, for as his civilization is so much older than ours they have presumably passed through all that kind of thing.

He watched it stoically, not wondering at a new thing, if indeed it be new to China, meditated on it awhile in a manner strange to us, and when he had added to his philosophy what little could be derived from the sight of this hansom cab, returned to his contemplation of that night's chances of wolves and to such occasional thoughts as he drew at times for his comfort out of the legends of China, that have been preserved for such uses. And on such a night their comfort was greatly needed. He thought of the legend of a dragon-lady, more fair than the flowers are, without an equal amongst daughters of men, humanly lovely to look on although her sire was a dragon, yet one who traced his descent from gods of the elder days, and so it was that she went in all her ways divine, like the earliest ones of her race, who were holier than the emperor.

She had come down one day out of her little land, a grassy valley hidden amongst the mountains; by the way of the mountain passes she came down, and the rocks of the rugged pass rang like little bells about her, as her bare feet went by, like silver bells to please her; and the sound was like the sound of the dromedaries of a prince when they come home at evening — their silver bells are ringing and the village-folk are glad. She had come down to pick the enchanted poppy that grew, and grows to this day — if only men

might find it — in a field at the feet of the mountains; if one should pick it happiness would come to all yellow men, victory without fighting, good wages, and ceaseless ease. She came down all fair from the mountains; and as the legend pleasantly passed through his mind in the bitterest hour of the night, which comes before dawn, two lights appeared and another hansom went by.

The man in the second cab was dressed the same as the first, he was wetter than the first, for the sleet had fallen all night, but evening dress is evening dress all the world over. The driver wore the same oiled hat, the same waterproof cape as the other. And when the cab had passed the darkness swirled back where the two small lamps had been, and the slush poured into the wheel-tracks and nothing remained but the speculations of the shepherd to tell that a hansom cab had been in that part of China; presently even these ceased, and he was back with the early legends again in contemplation of serener things.

And the storm and the cold and the darkness made one last effort, and shook the bones of that shepherd, and rattled the teeth in the head that mused on the flowery fables, and suddenly it was morning. You saw the outlines of the sheep all of a sudden, the shepherd counted them, no wolf had come, you could see them all quite clearly. And in the pale light of the earliest morning the third hansom appeared, with its lamps still burning, looking ridiculous in the daylight. They came out of the East with the sleet and were all going due westwards, and the occupant of the third cab also wore evening dress.

Calmly that Manchu shepherd, without curiosity, still less with wonder, but as one who would see whatever life has to show him, stood for four hours to see if another would come. The sleet and the East wind continued. And at the end of four hours another came. The driver was urging it on as fast as he could, as though he were making the most of the daylight, his cabby's cape was flapping wildly about him; inside the cab a man in evening dress was being jolted up and down by the unevenness of the plain.

This was of course that famous race from Pittsburg to Piccadilly, going round by the long way, that started one night after dinner from Mr. Flagdrop's house, and was won by Mr. Kagg, driving the Honourable Alfred Fortescue, whose father it will be remembered was Hagar Dermstein, and became (by Letters Patent) Sir Edgar Fortescue, and finally Lord St. George.

The Manchu shepherd stood there till evening, and when he saw that no more cabs would come, turned homeward in search of food.

And the rice prepared for him was hot and good, all the more after the bitter coldness of that sleet. And when he had consumed it her perused his experience, turning over again in his mind each detail of the cabs he had seen; and from that his thoughts slipped calmly to the glorious history of China, going back to the indecorous times before calmness came, and beyond those times to the happy days of the earth when the gods and dragons were here and China was young; and lighting his opium pipe and casting his thoughts easily forward he looked to the time when the dragons shall come again.

And for a long while then his mind reposed itself in such a dignified calm that no thought stirred there at all, from which when he was aroused he cast off his lethargy as a man emerges from the baths, refreshed, cleansed and contented, and put away from his musings the things he had seen on the plain as being evil and of the nature of dreams, or futile illusion, the results of activity which troubleth calm. And then he turned his mind toward the shape of God, the One, the Ineffable, who sits by the lotus lily, whose shape is the shape of peace, and denieth activity, and went out his thanks to him that he had cast all bad customs westward out of China as a woman throws household dirt out of her basket far out into neighbouring gardens.

From thankfulness he turned to calm again, and out of calm to sleep.

A PRETTY QUARREL

On one of those unattained, and unattainable pinnacles that are known as the Bleaks of Eerie, an eagle was looking East with a hopeful presage of blood.

For he knew, and rejoiced in the knowledge, that eastward over the dells the dwarfs were risen in Ulk, and gone to war with the demi-gods.

The demi-gods are they that were born of earthly women, but their sires are the elder gods who walked of old among men. Disguised they would go through the villages sometimes in summer evenings, cloaked and unknown of men; but the younger maidens knew them and always ran to them singing, for all that their elders said: in evenings long ago they had danced to the woods of the oak-trees. Their children dwelt out-of-doors beyond the dells of the bracken, in the cool and heathery lands, and were now at war with the dwarfs.

Dour and grim were the demi-gods and had the faults of both parents, and would not mix with men but claimed the right of their fathers, and would not play human games but forever were prophesying, and yet were more frivolous than their mothers were, whom the fairies had long since buried in wild wood gardens with more than human rites.

And being irked at their lack of rights and ill content with the land, and having no power at all over the wind and snow, and caring little for the powers they had, the demi-gods became idle, greasy, and slow; and the contemptuous dwarfs despised them ever.

The dwarfs were contemptuous of all things savouring of heaven, and of everything that was even partly divine. They were, so it has been said, of the seed of man; but, being squat and hairy like to the beasts; they praised all beastly things, and bestiality was shown reverence among them, so far as reverence was theirs to show. So most of all they despised the discontent of the demi-gods, who dreamed of the courts of heaven and power over wind and snow; for what better, said the dwarfs, could demi-gods do than nose in the earth for roots and cover their faces with mire, and run with the cheerful goats and be even as they?

Now in their idleness caused by their discontent, the seed of the gods and the maidens grew more discontented still, and only spake of or cared for heavenly things; until the contempt of the dwarfs, who heard of all these

doings, was bridled no longer and it must needs be war. They burned spice, dipped in blood and dried, before the chief of their witches, sharpening their axes, and made war on the demi-gods.

They passed by night over the Oolnar Mountains, each dwarf with his good axe, the old flint war-axe of his fathers, a night when no moon shone, and they went unshod, and swiftly, to come on the demi-gods in the darkness beyond the dells of Ulk, lying fat and idle and contemptible.

And before it was light they found the heathery lands, and the demi-gods lying lazy all over the side of a hill. The dwarfs stole towards them warily in the darkness.

Now the art that the gods love most is the art of war: and when the seed of the gods and those nimble maidens awoke and found it was war it was almost as much to them as the godlike pursuits of heaven, enjoyed in the marble courts; or power over wind and snow. They all drew out at once their swords of tempered bronze, cast down to them centuries since on stormy nights when their fathers, drew them and faced the dwarfs, and casting their idleness from them, fell on them, sword to axe. And the dwarfs fought hard that night, and bruised the demi-gods sorely, hacking with those huge axes that had not spared the oaks. Yet for all the weight of their blows and the cunning of their adventure, one point they had overlooked: *the demi-gods were immortal.*

As the fight rolled on towards morning the fighters were fewer and fewer, yet for all the blows of the dwarfs men fell upon one side only.

Dawn came and the demi-gods were fighting against no more than six, and the hour that follows dawn, and the last of the dwarfs was gone.

And when the light was clear on that peak of the Bleaks of Eerie the eagle left his crag and flew grimly East, and found it was as he had hoped in the matter of blood.

But the demi-gods lay down in their heathery lands, for once content though so far from the courts of heaven, and even half forgot their heavenly rights, and sighed no more for power over wind and snow.

HOW THE GODS AVENGED MEOUL KI NING

Meoul Ki Ning was on his way with a lily from the lotus ponds of Esh to offer it to the Goddess of Abundance in her temple Aoul Keroon. And on the road from the pond to the little hill and the temple Aoul Keroon, Ap Ariph, his enemy, shot him with an arrow from a bow that he had made out of bamboo, and took his pretty lily up the hill and offered it to the Goddess of Abundance in her temple Aoul Keroon. And the Goddess was pleased with the gift, as all women are, and sent pleasant dreams to Ap Ariph for seven nights straight from the moon.

And on the seventh night the gods held conclave together, on the cloudy peaks they held it, above Narn, Ktoon, and Pti. So high their peak arises that no man heard their voices. They spake on that cloudy mountain (not the highest hamlet heard them). “What doth the Goddess of Abundance,” (but naming her Lling, as they name her), “what doth she sending sweet dreams for seven nights to Ap Ariph?”

And the gods sent for their seer who is all eyes and feet, running to and fro on the Earth, observing the ways of men, seeing even their littlest doings, never deeming a doing too little, but knowing the web of the gods is woven of littlest things. He it is that sees the cat in the garden of parakeets, the thief in the upper chamber, the sin of the child with the honey, the women talking indoors and the small hut’s innermost things. Standing before the gods he told them the case of Ap Ariph and the wrongs of Meoul Ki Ning and the rape of the lotus lily; he told of the cutting and making of Ap Ariph’s bamboo bow, of the shooting of Meoul Ki Ning, and of how the arrow hit him, and the smile on the face of Lling when she came by the lotus bloom.

And the gods were wroth with Ap Ariph and swore to avenge Ki Ning.

And the ancient one of the gods, he that is older than Earth, called up the thunder at once, and raised his arms and cried out on the gods’ high windy mountain, and prophesied on those rocks with runes that were older than speech, and sang in his wrath old songs that he had learned in storm from the sea, when only that peak of the gods in the whole of the earth was dry; and he swore that Ap Ariph should die that night, and the thunder raged about him, and the tears of Lling were vain.

The lightning stroke of the gods leaping earthward seeking Ap Ariph passed near to his house but missed him. A certain vagabond was down from the hills, singing songs in the street near by the house of Ap Ariph, songs of a former folk that dwelt once, they say, in those valleys, and begging for rice and curds; it was him the lightning hit.

And the gods were satisfied, and their wrath abated, and their thunder rolled away and the great black clouds dissolved, and the ancient one of the gods went back to his age-old sleep, and morning came, and the birds and the light shone on the mountain, and the peak stood clear to see, the serene home of the gods.

THE GIFT OF THE GODS

There was once a man who sought a boon of the gods. For peace was over the world and all things savoured of sameness, and the man was weary at heart and sighed for the tents and the warfields. Therefore he sought a boon of the ancient gods. And appearing before them he said to them, “Ancient gods; there is peace in the land where I dwell, and indeed to the uttermost parts, and we are full weary of peace. O ancient gods, grant us war!”

And the ancient gods made him a war.

And the man went forth with his sword, and behold it was even war. And the man remembered the little things that he knew, and thought of the quiet days that there used to be, and at night on the hard ground dreamed of the things of peace. And dearer and dearer grew the wonted things, the dull but easeful things of the days of peace, and remembering these he began to regret the war, and sought once more a boon of the ancient gods, and appearing before them he said: “O ancient gods, indeed but a man loves best the days of peace. Therefore take back your war and give us peace, for indeed of all your blessedness peace is best.”

And the man returned again to the haunts of peace.

But in a while the man grew weary of peace, of the things that he used to know, and the savour of sameness again; and sighing again for the tents, and appearing once more to the gods, he said to them: “Ancient gods; we do not love your peace, for indeed the days are dull, and a man is best at war.”

And the gods made him a war.

And there were drums again, the smoke of campfires again, wind in the waste again, the sound of horses of war, burning cities again, and the things that wanderers know; and the thoughts of that man went home to the ways of peace; moss upon lawns again, light in old spires again, sun upon gardens again, flowers in pleasant woods and sleep and the paths of peace.

And once more the man appeared to the ancient gods and sought from them one more boon, and said to them: “Ancient gods; indeed but the world and we are a-weary of war and long for the ancient ways and the paths of peace.”

So the gods took back their war and gave him peace.

But the man took counsel one day and communed long with himself and said to himself: “Behold, the wishes I wish, which the gods grant, are not to

be much desired; and if the gods should one day grant a wish and never revoke it, which is a way of the gods, I should be sorely tried because of my wish; my wishes are dangerous wishes and not to be desired."

And therefore he wrote an anonymous letter to the gods, writing: "O ancient gods; this man that hath four times troubled you with his wishes, wishing for peace and war, is a man that hath no reverence for the gods, speaking ill of them on days when they do not hear, and speaking well of them on holy days and at the appointed hours when the gods are hearkening to prayer. Therefore grant no more wishes to this impious man."

And the days of peace wore on and there arose again from the earth, like mist in the autumn from the fields that generations have ploughed, the savour of sameness again. And the man went forth one morning and appeared once more to the gods, and cried: "O ancient gods; give us but one war again, for I would be back to the camps and debateable borders of lands."

And the gods said: "We hear not well of your way of life, yea ill things have come to our hearing, so that we grant no more the wishes you wish."

THE SACK OF EMERALDS

One bad October night in the high wolds beyond Wiltshire, with a north wind chaunting of winter, with the old leaves letting go their hold one by one from branches and dropping down to decay, with a mournful sound of owls, and in fearsome loneliness, there trudged in broken boots and in wet and windy rags an old man, stooping low under a sack of emeralds. It were easy to see had you been travelling late on that inauspicious night, that the burden of the sack was far too great for the poor old man that bore it. And had you flashed a lantern in his face there was a look there of hopelessness and fatigue that would have told you it was no wish of his that kept him tottering on under that bloated sack.

When the menacing look of the night and its cheerless sounds, and the cold, and the weight of the sack, had all but brought him to the door of death, and he had dropped his sack onto the road and was dragging it on behind him, just as he felt that his final hour was come, and come (which was worse) as he held the accursed sack, just then he saw the bulk and the black shape of the Sign of the Lost Shepherd loom up by the ragged way. He opened the door and staggered into the light and sank on a bench with his huge sack beside him.

All this you had seen had you been on that lonely road, so late on those bitter wolds, with their outlines vast and mournful in the dark, and their little clumps of trees sad with October. But neither you nor I were out that night. I did not see the poor old man and his sack until he sank down all of a heap in the lighted inn.

And Yon the blacksmith was there; and the carpenter, Willie Losh; and Jackers, the postman's son. And they gave him a glass of beer. And the old man drank it up, still hugging his emeralds.

And at last they asked him what he had in his sack, the question he clearly dreaded; and he only clasped yet tighter the sodden sack and mumbled he had potatoes.

"Potatoes," said Yon the blacksmith.

"Potatoes," said Willie Losh.

And when he heard the doubt that was in their voices the old man shivered and moaned.

“Potatoes, did you say?” said the postman’s son. And they all three rose and tried to peer at the sack that the rain-soaked wayfarer so zealously sheltered.

And from the old man’s fierceness I had said that, had it not been for that foul night on the roads and the weight he had carried so far and the fearful winds of October, he had fought with the blacksmith, the carpenter and the postman’s son, all three, till he beat them away from his sack. And weary and wet as he was he fought them hard.

I should no doubt have interfered; and yet the three men meant no harm to the wayfarer, but resented the reticence that he displayed to them though they had given him beer; it was to them as though a master key had failed to open a cupboard. And, as for me, curiosity held me down to my chair and forbade me to interfere on behalf of the sack; for the old man’s furtive ways, and the night out of which he came, and the hour of his coming, and the look of his sack, all made me long as much to know what he had, as even the blacksmith, the carpenter and the postman’s son.

And then they found the emeralds. They were all bigger than hazel nuts, hundreds and hundreds of them: and the old man screamed.

“Come, come, we’re not thieves,” said the blacksmith.

“We’re not thieves,” said the carpenter.

“We’re not thieves,” said the postman’s son.

And with awful fear on his face the wayfarer closed his sack, whimpering over his emeralds and furtively glancing round as though the loss of his secret were and utterly deadly thing. And then they asked him to give them just one each, just one huge emerald each, because they had given him a glass of beer. Then to see the wayfarer shrink against his sack and guard it with clutching fingers one would have said that he was a selfish man, were it not for the terror that was freezing his face. I have seen men look sheer at Death with far less fear.

And they took their emerald all three, one enormous emerald each, while the old man hopelessly struggled till he saw his three emeralds go, and fell to the floor and wept, a pitiable, sodden heap.

And about that time I began to hear far off down the windy road, by which that sack had come, faintly at first and slowly louder and louder, the click clack clop of a lame horse coming nearer. Click clack clop and a loose shoe rattling, the sound of a horse too weary to be out upon such a night, too lame to be out at all.

Click clack clop. And all of a sudden the old wayfarer heard it; heard it above the sound of his won sobbing, and at once went white to the lips. Such sudden fear as blanched him in a moment struck right to the hearts of all there. They muttered to him that it was only their play, they hastily whispered excuses, they asked him what was wrong, but seemed scarcely to hope for an answer, nor did he speak, but sat with a frozen stare, all at once dry-eyed, a monument to terror.

Nearer and nearer came the click clack clop.

And when I saw the expression of that man's face and how its horror deepened as the ominous sound drew nearer, then I knew that something was wrong. And looking for the last time upon all four I saw the wayfarer horror-struck by his sack and the other three crowding round to put their huge emeralds back then, even on such a night, I slipped away from the inn.

Outside the bitter wind roared in my ears, and close in the darkness the horse went click clack clop.

And as soon as my eyes could see at all in the night I saw a man in a huge hat looped up in front, wearing a sword in a scabbard shabby and huge, and looking blacker than the darkness, riding on a lean horse slowly up to the inn. Whether his were the emeralds, or who he was, or why he rode a lame horse on such a night, I did not stop to discover, but went at once from the inn as he strode in his great black riding coat up to the door.

And that was the last that was ever seen of the wayfarer; the blacksmith, the carpenter or the postman's son.

THE OLD BROWN COAT

My friend, Mr. Douglas Ainslie, tells me that Sir James Barrie once told him this story. The story, or rather the fragment, was as follows.

A man strolling into an auction somewhere abroad, I think it must have been France, for they bid in francs, found they were selling old clothes. And following some idle whim he soon found himself bidding for an old coat. A man bid against him, he bid against the man. Up and up went the price till the old coat was knocked down to him for twenty pounds. As he went away with the coat he saw the other bidder looking at him with an expression of fury.

That's as far as the story goes. But how, Mr. Ainslie asked me, did the matter develop, and why that furious look? I at once made enquiries at a reliable source and have ascertained that the man's name was Peters, who thus oddly purchased a coat, and that he took it to the Rue de Rivoli, to a hotel where he lodged, from the little low, dark auction room by the Seine in which he concluded the bargain. There he examined it, off and on, all day and much of the next morning, a light brown overcoat with tails, without discovering any excuse, far less a reason, for having spent twenty pounds on so worn a thing. And late next morning to his sitting room looking out on the Gardens of the Tuileries the man with the furious look was ushered in.

Grim he stood, silent and angry, till the guiding waiter went. Not till then did he speak, and his words came clear and brief, welling up from deep emotions.

"How did you dare to bid against me?"

His name was Santiago. And for many moments Peters found no excuse to offer, no apology, nothing in extenuation. Lamely at last, weakly, knowing his argument to be of no avail, he muttered something to the intent that Mr. Santiago could have outbid him.

"No," said the stranger. "We don't want all the town in this. This is a matter between you and me." He paused, then added in his fierce, curt way: "A thousand pounds, no more."

Almost dumbly Peters accepted the offer and, pocketing the thousand pounds that was paid him, and apologizing for the inconvenience he had unwittingly caused, tried to show the stranger out. But Santiago strode swiftly on before him, taking the coat, and was gone.

There followed between Peters and his second thoughts another long afternoon of bitter reproaches. Why ever had he let go so thoughtlessly of a garment that so easily fetched a thousand pounds? And the more he brooded on this the more clearly did he perceive that he had lost an unusual opportunity of a first class investment of a speculative kind. He knew men perhaps better than he knew materials; and, though he could not see in that old brown coat the value of so much as a thousand pounds, he saw far more than that in the man's eager need for it. An afternoon of brooding over lost opportunities led to a night of remorse, and scarcely had day dawned when he ran to his sitting-room to see if he still had safe the card of Santiago. And there was the neat and perfumed *carte de visite* with Santiago's Parisian address in the corner.

That morning he sought him out, and found Santiago seated at a table with chemicals and magnifying glasses beside him examining, as it lay spread wide before him, the old brown coat. And Peters fancied he wore a puzzled air.

They came at once to business. Peters was rich and asked Santiago to name his price, and that small dark man admitted financial straits, and so was willing to sell for thirty thousand pounds. A little bargaining followed, the price came down and the old brown coat changed hands once more, for twenty thousand pounds.

Let any who may be inclined to doubt my story understand that in the City, as any respectable company promoter will tell them, twenty thousand pounds is invested almost daily with less return for it than an old tail coat. And, whatever doubts Mr. Peters felt that day about the wisdom of his investment, there before him lay that tangible return, that something that may be actually fingered and seen, which is so often denied to the investor in gold mines and other Selected Investments. Yet as the days wore on and the old coat grew no younger, nor any more wonderful, nor the least useful, but more and more like an ordinary old coat, Peters began once more to doubt his astuteness. Before the week was out his doubts had grown acute. And then one morning, Santiago returned. A man, he said, had just arrived from Spain, a friend unexpected all of a sudden in Paris, from whom he might borrow money: and would Peters resell the coat for thirty thousand pounds?

It was then that Peters, seeing his opportunity, cast aside the pretence that he had maintained for so long of knowing something about the

mysterious coat, and demanded to know its properties. Santiago swore that he knew not, and repeatedly swore the same by many sacred names; but when Peters as often threatened not to sell, Santiago at last drew out a thin cigar and, lighting it and settling himself in a chair, told all he knew of the coat.

He had been on its tracks for weeks with suspicions growing all the time that it was no ordinary coat, and at last he had run it to earth in that auction room but would not bid for it more than twenty pounds for fear of letting every one into the secret. What the secret was he swore he did not know, but this much he knew all along, that the weight of the coat was absolutely nothing; and he had discovered by testing it with acids that the brown stuff of which the coat was made was neither cloth nor silk nor any known material, and would neither burn nor tear. He believed it to be some undiscovered element. And the properties of the coat which he was convinced were marvellous he felt sure of discovering within another week by means of experiments with his chemicals. Again he offered thirty thousand pounds, to be paid within two or three days if all went well. And then they started haggling together as business men will.

And all the morning went by over the gardens of the Tuileries and the afternoons came on, and only by two o'clock they arrived at an understanding, on a basis, as they called it, of thirty thousand guineas. And the old tail coat was brought out and spread on the table, and they examined it together and chatted about its properties, all the more friendly for their strenuous argument. And Santiago was rising up to go, and Peters pleasantly holding out his hand, when a step was heard on the stair. It echoed up to the room, the door opened. And an elderly labouring man came stumping in. He walked with difficulty, almost like a bather who has been swimming and floating all morning and misses the buoyancy of the water when he has come to land. He stumped up to the table without speaking and there at once caught sight of the old brown coat.

"Why," he said, "that be my old coat."

And without another word he put it on. In the fierce glare of his eyes as he fitted on that coat, carefully fastening the buttons, buttoning up the flap of a pocket here, unbuttoning one there, neither Peters nor Santiago found a word to say. They sat there wondering how they had dared to bid for that brown tail coat, how they had dared to buy it, even to touch it, they sat there silent without a single excuse. And with no word more the old labourer

stumped across the room, opened wide the double window that looked on the Tuileries gardens and, flashing back over his shoulder one look that was full of scorn, stumped away up through the air at an angle of forty degrees.

Peters and Santiago saw him bear to his left from the window; passing diagonally over the Rue de Rivoli and over a corner of the Tuileries gardens; they saw him clear the Louvre, and thence they dumbly watched him still slanting upwards, stepping out with a firmer and more confident stride as he dwindled and dwindled away with his old brown coat.

Neither spoke till he was no more than a speck in the sky far away over Paris going South Eastwards.

"Well I am blowed," said Peters.

But Santiago sadly shook his head. "I knew it was a good coat," he said. "I *knew* it was a good coat."

AN ARCHIVE OF THE OLDER MYSTERIES

It is told in the Archive of the Older Mysteries of China that one of the house of Tlang was cunning with sharpened iron and went to the green jade mountains and carved a green jade god. And this was in the cycle of the Dragon, the seventy-eighth year.

And for nearly a hundred years men doubted the green jade god, and then they worshipped him for a thousand years; and after that they doubted him again, and the green jade god made a miracle and whelmed the green jade mountains, sinking them down one evening at sunset into the earth so that there is only a marsh where the green jade mountains were. And the marsh is full of the lotus.

By the side of this lotus marsh, just as it glitters at evening, walks Li La Ting, the Chinese girl, to bring the cows home; she goes behind them singing of the river Lo Lang Ho. And thus she sings of the river, even of Lo Lang Ho: she sings that he is indeed of all rivers the greatest, born of more ancient mountains than even the wise men know, swifter than hares, more deep than the sea, the master of other rivers perfumed even as roses and fairer than the sapphires around the neck of a prince. And then she would pray to the river Lo Lang Ho, master of rivers and rival of the heaven at dawn, to bring her down in a boat of light bamboo a lover rowing out of the inner land in a garment of yellow silk with turquoises at his waist, young and merry and idle, with a face as yellow as gold and a ruby in his cap with lanterns shining at dusk.

Thus she would pray of an evening to the river Lo Lang Ho as she went behind the cows at the edge of the lotus marshes and the green jade god under the lotus marshes was jealous of the lover that the maiden Li La Ting would pray for of an evening to the river Lo Lang Ho, and he cursed the river after the manner of gods and turned it into a narrow and evil smelling stream.

And all this happened a thousand years ago, and Lo Lang Ho is but a reproach among travelers and the story of that great river is forgotten, and what became of the maiden no tale saith though all men think she became a goddess of jade to sit and smile at a lotus on a lotus carven of stone by the side of the green jade god far under the marshes upon the peaks of the

mountains, but women know that her ghost still haunts the lotus marshes on glittering evenings, singing of Lo Lang Ho.

A CITY OF WONDER

Past the upper corner of a precipice the moon rode into view. Night had for some while now hooded the marvelous city. They had planned it to be symmetrical, its maps were orderly, near; in two dimensions, that is length and breadth, its streets met and crossed each other with regular exactitude, with all the dullness of the science of man. The city had laughed as it were and shaken itself free and in the third dimension had soared away to consort with all the careless, irregular things that know not man for their master.

Yet even there, even at those altitudes, man had still clung to his symmetry, still claimed that these mountains were houses; in orderly rows the thousand windows stood watching each other precisely, all orderly, all alike, lest any should guess by day that there might be mystery here. So they stood in the daylight. The sun set, still they were orderly, as scientific and regular as the labour of only man and the bees. The mists darken at evening. And first the Woolworth Building goes away, sheer home and away from any allegiance to man, to take his place among mountains; for I saw him stand with the lower slopes invisible in the gloaming, while only his pinnacles showed up in the clearer sky. Thus only mountains stand.

Still all the windows of the other buildings stood in their regular rows — all side by side in silence, not yet changed, as though waiting one furtive moment to step from the schemes of man, to slip back to mystery and romance again as cats do when they steal on velvet feet away from familiar hearths in the dark of the moon.

Night fell, and the moment came. Someone lit a window, far up another shone with its orange glow. Window by window, and yet not nearly all. Surely if modern man with his clever schemes held any sway here still he would have turned one switch and lit them all together; but we are back with the older man of whom far songs tell, he whose spirit is kin to strange romances and mountains. One by one the windows shine from the precipices; some twinkle, some are dark; man's orderly schemes have gone, and we are amongst vast heights lit by inscrutable beacons.

I have seen such cities before, and I have told of them in *The Book of Wonder*.

Here in New York a poet met a welcome.

*** * BEYOND THE FIELDS WE KNOW * ***

PUBLISHER'S NOTE

Beyond the fields we know, in the Lands of Dream, lies the Valley of the Yann where the mighty river of that name, rising in the Hills of Hap, idleing its way by massive dream-evoking amethyst cliffs, orchid-laden forests, and ancient mysterious cities, comes to the Gates of Yann and passes to the sea.

Some years since a poet visiting that land voyaged down the Yann on a trading bark named the *Bird of the River* and returning safe to Ireland, set down in a tale that is called *Idle Days on the Yann*, the wonders of that voyage. Now the tale being one of marvellous beauty, found its way into a volume we call *A Dreamer's Tales* where it may be found to this day with other wondrous tales of that same poet.

As the days went by the lure of the river and pleasant memories of his shipmates bore in with a constant urge on the soul of the poet that he might once more journey Beyond the Fields We Know and come to the floor of Yann; and one day it fell out that turning into Go-by Street that leads up from the Embankment toward the Strand and which you and I always do go by and perhaps never see in passing, he found the door which one enters on the way to the Land of Dream.

Twice of late has Lord Dunsany entered that door in Go-by Street and returned to the Valley of the Yann and each time come back with a tale; one, of his search for the *Bird of the River,* the other of the mighty hunter who avenged the destruction of Perdóndaris, where on his earlier voyage the captain tied up his ship and traded within the city. That all may be clear to those who read these new tales and to whom no report has previously come Beyond the Fields We Know the publishers reprint in this volume *Idle Days on the Yann*.

IDLE DAYS ON THE YANN

So I came down through the wood to the bank of Yann and found, as had been prophesied, the ship *Bird of the River* about to loose her cable.

The captain sate cross-legged upon the white deck with his scimitar lying beside him in its jewelled scabbard, and the sailors toiled to spread the nimble sails to bring the ship into the central stream of Yann, and all the while sang ancient soothing songs. And the wind of the evening descending cool from the snowfields of some mountainous abode of distant gods came suddenly, like glad tidings to an anxious city, into the wing-like sails.

And so we came into the central stream, whereat the sailors lowered the greater sails. But I had gone to bow before the captain, and to inquire concerning the miracles, and appearances among men, of the most holy gods of whatever land he had come from. And the captain answered that he came from fair Belzoond, and worshipped gods that were the least and humblest, who seldom sent the famine or the thunder, and were easily appeased with little battles. And I told how I came from Ireland, which is of Europe, whereat the captain and all the sailors laughed, for they said, "There are no such places in all the land of dreams." When they had ceased to mock me, I explained that my fancy mostly dwelt in the desert of Cuppar-Nombo, about a beautiful city called Golthoth the Damned, which was sentinelled all round by wolves and their shadows, and had been utterly desolate for years and years, because of a curse which the gods once spoke in anger and could never since recall. And sometimes my dreams took me as far as Pungar Vees, the red walled city where the fountains are, which trades with the Isles and Thul. When I said this they complimented me upon the abode of my fancy, saying that, though they had never seen these cities, such places might well be imagined. For the rest of that evening I bargained with the captain over the sum that I should pay him for my fare if God and the tide of Yann should bring us safely as far as the cliffs by the sea, which are named Bar-Wul-Yann, the Gate of Yann.

And now the sun had set, and all the colours of the world and heaven had held a festival with him, and slipped one by one away before the imminent approach of night. The parrots had all flown home to the jungle on either bank, the monkeys in rows in safety on high branches of the trees were silent and asleep, the fireflies in the deeps of the forest were going up and

down, and the great stars came gleaming out to look on the face of Yann. Then the sailors lighted lanterns and hung them round the ship, and the light flashed out on a sudden and dazzled Yann, and the ducks that fed along his marshy banks all suddenly arose, and made wide circles in the upper air, and saw the distant reaches of the Yann and the white mist that softly cloaked the jungle, before they returned again into their marshes.

And then the sailors knelt on the decks and prayed, not all together, but five or six at a time. Side by side there kneeled down together five or six, for there only prayed at the same time men of different faiths, so that no god should hear two men praying to him at once. As soon as any one had finished his prayer, another of the same faith would take his place. Thus knelt the row of five or six with bended heads under the fluttering sail, while the central stream of the River Yann took them on towards the sea, and their prayers rose up from among the lanterns and went towards the stars. And behind them in the after end of the ship the helmsman prayed aloud the helmsman's prayer, which is prayed by all who follow his trade upon the River Yann, of whatever faith they be. And the captain prayed to his little lesser gods, to the gods that bless Belzoond.

And I too felt that I would pray. Yet I liked not to pray to a jealous God there where the frail affectionate gods whom the heathen love were being humbly invoked; so I bethought me, instead, of Sheol Nugganoth, whom the men of the jungle have long since deserted, who is now unworshipped and alone; and to him I prayed.

And upon us praying the night came suddenly down, as it comes upon all men who pray at evening and upon all men who do not; yet our prayers comforted our own souls when we thought of the Great Night to come.

And so Yann bore us magnificently onwards, for he was elate with molten snow that the Poltiades had brought him from the Hills of Hap, and the Marn and Migris were swollen full with floods; and he bore us in his might past Kyph and Pir, and we saw the lights of Goolunza.

Soon we all slept except the helmsman, who kept the ship in the midstream of Yann.

When the sun rose the helmsman ceased to sing, for by song he cheered himself in the lonely night. When the song ceased we suddenly all awoke, and another took the helm, and the helmsman slept.

We knew that soon we should come to Mandaroon. We made a meal, and Mandaroon appeared. Then the captain commanded, and the sailors loosed

again the greater sails, and the ship turned and left the stream of Yann and came into a harbour beneath the ruddy walls of Mandaroon. Then while the sailors went and gathered fruits I came alone to the gate of Mandaroon. A few huts were outside it, in which lived the guard. A sentinel with a long white beard was standing in the gate, armed with a rusty pike. He wore large spectacles, which were covered with dust. Through the gate I saw the city. A deathly stillness was over all of it. The ways seemed untrodden, and moss was thick on doorsteps; in the market-place huddled figures lay asleep. A scent of incense and burned poppies, and there was a hum of the echoes of distant bells. I said to the sentinel in the tongue of the region of Yann, "Why are they all asleep in this still city?"

He answered: "None may ask questions in this gate for fear they wake the people of the city. For when the people of this city wake the gods will die. And when the gods die men may dream no more." And I began to ask him what gods that city worshipped, but he lifted his pike because none might ask questions there. So I left him and went back to the *Bird of the River*.

Certainly Mandaroon was beautiful with her white pinnacles peering over her ruddy walls and the green of her copper roofs.

When I came back again to the *Bird of the River*, I found the sailors were returned to the ship. Soon we weighed anchor, and sailed out again, and so came once more to the middle of the river. And now the sun was moving towards his heights, and there had reached us on the River Yann the song of those countless myriads of choirs that attend him in his progress round the world. For the little creatures that have many legs had spread their gauze wings easily on the air, as a man rests his elbows on a balcony and gave jubilant, ceremonial praises to the sun, or else they moved together on the air in wavering dances intricate and swift, or turned aside to avoid the onrush of some drop of water that a breeze had shaken from a jungle orchid, chilling the air and driving it before it, as it fell whirring in its rush to the earth; but all the while they sang triumphantly. "For the day is for us," they said, "whether our great and sacred father the Sun shall bring up more life like us from the marshes, or whether all the world shall end to-night." And there sang all those whose notes are known to human ears, as well as those whose far more numerous notes have never been heard by man.

To these a rainy day had been as an era of war that should desolate continents during all the lifetime of a man.

And there came out also from the dark and steaming jungle to behold and rejoice in the Sun the huge and lazy butterflies. And they danced, but danced idly, on the ways of the air, as some haughty queen of distant conquered lands might in her poverty and exile dance, in some encampment of the gipsies, for the mere bread to live by, but beyond that would never abate her pride to dance for a fragment more.

And the butterflies sung of strange and painted things, of purple orchids and of lost pink cities and the monstrous colours of the jungle's decay. And they, too, were among those whose voices are not discernible by human ears. And as they floated above the river, going from forest to forest, their splendour was matched by the inimical beauty of the birds who darted out to pursue them. Or sometimes they settled on the white and wax-like blooms of the plant that creeps and clambers about the trees of the forest; and their purple wings flashed out on the great blossoms as, when the caravans go from Nurl to Thace, the gleaming silks flash out upon the snow, where the crafty merchants spread them one by one to astonish the mountaineers of the Hills of Noor.

But upon men and beasts the sun sent a drowsiness. The river monsters along the river's marge lay dormant in the slime. The sailors pitched a pavilion, with golden tassels, for the captain upon the deck, and then went, all but the helmsman, under a sail that they had hung as an awning between two masts. Then they told tales to one another, each of his own city or of the miracles of his god, until all were fallen asleep. The captain offered me the shade of his pavilion with the gold tassels, and there we talked for a while, he telling me that he was taking merchandise to Perdóndaris, and that he would take back to fair Belzoond things appertaining to the affairs of the sea. Then, as I watched through the pavilion's opening the brilliant birds and butterflies that crossed and recrossed over the river, I fell asleep, and dreamed that I was a monarch entering his capital underneath arches of flags, and all the musicians of the world were there, playing melodiously their instruments; but no one cheered.

In the afternoon, as the day grew cooler again, I awoke and found the captain buckling on his scimitar, which he had taken off him while he rested.

And now we were approaching the wide court of Astahahn, which opens upon the river. Strange boats of antique design were chained there to the steps. As we neared it we saw the open marble court, on three sides of

which stood the city fronting on colonnades. And in the court and along the colonnades the people of that city walked with solemnity and care according to the rites of ancient ceremony. All in that city was of ancient device; the carving on the houses, which, when age had broken it remained unrepaired, was of the remotest times, and everywhere were represented in stone beasts that have long since passed away from Earth — the dragon, the griffin, and the hippogriffin, and the different species of gargoyle. Nothing was to be found, whether material or custom, that was new in Astahahn. Now they took no notice at all of us as we went by, but continued their processions and ceremonies in the ancient city, and the sailors, knowing their custom, took no notice of them. But I called, as we came near, to one who stood beside the water's edge, asking him what men did in Astahahn and what their merchandise was, and with whom they traded. He said, "Here we have fettered and manacled Time, who would otherwise slay the gods."

I asked him what gods they worshipped in that city, and he said, "All those gods whom Time has not yet slain." Then he turned from me and would say no more, but busied himself in behaving in accordance with ancient custom. And so, according to the will of Yann, we drifted onwards and left Astahahn, and we found in greater quantities such birds as prey on fishes. And they were very wonderful in their plumage, and they came not out of the jungle, but flew, with their long necks stretched out before them, and their legs lying on the wind behind straight up the river over the mid-stream.

And now the evening began to gather in. A thick white mist had appeared over the river, and was softly rising higher. It clutched at the trees with long impalpable arms, it rose higher and higher, chilling the air; and white shapes moved away into the jungle as though the ghosts of shipwrecked mariners were searching stealthily in the darkness for the spirits of evil that long ago had wrecked them on the Yann.

As the sun sank behind the field of orchids that grew on the matted summit of the jungle, the river monsters came wallowing out of the slime in which they had reclined during the heat of the day, and the great beasts of the jungle came down to drink. The butterflies a while since were gone to rest. In little narrow tributaries that we passed night seemed already to have fallen, though the sun which had disappeared from us had not yet set.

And now the birds of the jungle came flying home far over us, with the sunlight glistening pink upon their breasts, and lowered their pinions as soon as they saw the Yann, and dropped into the trees. And the widgeon began to go up the river in great companies, all whistling, and then would suddenly wheel and all go down again. And there shot by us the small and arrow-like teal; and we heard the manifold cries of flocks of geese, which the sailors told me had recently come in from crossing over the Lispasian ranges; every year they come by the same way, close by the peak of Mluna, leaving it to the left, and the mountain eagles know the way they come and — men say — the very hour, and every year they expect them by the same way as soon as the snows have fallen upon the Northern Plains. But soon it grew so dark that we saw these birds no more, and only heard the whirring of their wings, and of countless others besides, until they all settled down along the banks of the river, and it was the hour when the birds of the night went forth. Then the sailors lit the lanterns for the night, and huge moths appeared, flapping about the ship, and at moments their gorgeous colours would be revealed by the lanterns, then they would pass into the night again, where all was black. And again the sailors prayed, and thereafter we supped and slept, and the helmsman took our lives into his care.

When I awoke I found that we had indeed come to Perdóndaris, that famous city. For there it stood upon the left of us, a city fair and notable, and all the more pleasant for our eyes to see after the jungle that was so long with us. And we were anchored by the marketplace, and the captain's merchandise was all displayed, and a merchant of Perdóndaris stood looking at it. And the captain had his scimitar in his hand, and was beating with it in anger upon the deck, and the splinters were flying up from the white planks; for the merchant had offered him a price for his merchandise that the captain declared to be an insult to himself and his country's gods, whom he now said to be great and terrible gods, whose curses were to be dreaded. But the merchant waved his hands, which were of great fatness, showing his pink palms, and swore that of himself he thought not at all, but only of the poor folk in the huts beyond the city to whom he wished to sell the merchandise for as low a price as possible, leaving no remuneration for himself. For the merchandise was mostly the thick toomarund carpets that in the winter keep the wind from the floor, and tollub which the people smoke in pipes. Therefore the merchant said if he offered a piffek more the poor folk must go without their toomarunds when the winter came, and

without their tollub in the evenings, or else he and his aged father must starve together. Thereat the captain lifted his scimitar to his own throat, saying that he was now a ruined man, and that nothing remained to him but death. And while he was carefully lifting he beard with his left hand, the merchant eyed the merchandise again, and said that rather than see so worthy a captain die, a man for whom he had conceived an especial love when first he saw the manner in which he handled his ship, he and his aged father should starve together and therefore he offered fifteen piffeks more.

When he said this the captain prostrated himself and prayed to his gods that they might yet sweeten this merchant's bitter heart — to his little lesser gods, to the gods that bless Belzoond.

At last the merchant offered yet five piffeks more. Then the captain wept, for he said that he was deserted of his gods; and the merchant also wept, for he said that he was thinking of his aged father, and of how soon he would starve, and he hid his weeping face with both his hands, and eyed the tollub again between his fingers. And so the bargain was concluded, and the merchant took the toomarund and tollub, paying for them out of a great clinking purse. And these were packed up into bales again, and three of the merchant's slaves carried them upon their heads into the city. And all the while the sailors had sat silent, cross-legged in a crescent upon the deck, eagerly watching the bargain, and now a murmur of satisfaction arose among them, and they began to compare it among themselves with other bargains that they had known. And I found out from them that there are seven merchants in Perdóndaris, and that they had all come to the captain one by one before the bargaining began, and each had warned him privately against the others. And to all the merchants the captain had offered the wine of his own country, that they make in fair Belzoond, but could in no wise persuade them to it. But now that the bargain was over, and the sailors were seated at the first meal of the day, the captain appeared among them with a cask of that wine, and we broached it with care and all made merry together. And the captain was glad in his heart because he knew that he had much honour in the eyes of his men because of the bargain that he had made. So the sailors drank the wine of their native land, and soon their thoughts were back in fair Belzoond and the little neighbouring cities of Durl and Duz.

But for me the captain poured into a little glass some heavy yellow wine from a small jar which he kept apart among his sacred things. Thick and sweet it was, even like honey, yet there was in its heart a mighty, ardent fire

which had authority over souls of men. It was made, the captain told me, with great subtlety by the secret craft of a family of six who lived in a hut on the mountains of Hian Min. Once in these mountains, he said, he followed the spoor of a bear, and he came suddenly on a man of that family who had hunted the same bear, and he was at the end of a narrow way with precipice all about him, and his spear was sticking in the bear, and the wound not fatal, and he had no other weapon. And the bear was walking towards the man, very slowly because his wound irked him — yet he was now very close. And what the captain did he would not say, but every year as soon as the snows are hard, and travelling is easy on the Hian Min, that man comes down to the market in the plains, and always leaves for the captain in the gate of fair Belzoond a vessel of that priceless secret wine.

And as I sipped the wine and the captain talked, I remembered me of stalwart noble things that I had long since resolutely planned, and my soul seemed to grow mightier within me and to dominate the whole tide of the Yann. It may be that I then slept. Or, if I did not, I do not now minutely recollect every detail of that morning's occupations. Towards evening, I awoke and wishing to see Perdóndaris before we left in the morning, and being unable to wake the captain, I went ashore alone. Certainly Perdóndaris was a powerful city; it was encompassed by a wall of great strength and altitude, having in it hollow ways for troops to walk in, and battlements along it all the way, and fifteen strong towers on it in every mile, and copper plaques low down where men could read them, telling in all the languages of those parts of the Earth — one language on each plaque — the tale of how an army once attacked Perdóndaris and what befell that army. Then I entered Perdóndaris and found all the people dancing, clad in brilliant silks, and playing on the tam-bang as they danced. For a fearful thunderstorm had terrified them while I slept, and the fires of death, they said, had danced over Perdóndaris, and now the thunder had gone leaping away large and black and hideous, they said, over the distant hills, and had turned round snarling at them, showing his gleaming teeth, and had stamped, as he went, upon the hilltops until they rang as though they had been bronze. And often and again they stopped in their merry dances and prayed to the God they knew not, saying, "O, God that we know not, we thank Thee for sending the thunder back to his hills." And I went on and came to the market-place, and lying there upon the marble pavement I saw the merchant fast asleep and breathing heavily, with his face and the palms

of his hands towards the sky, and slaves were fanning him to keep away the flies. And from the market-place I came to a silver temple and then to a palace of onyx, and there were many wonders in Perdóndaris, and I would have stayed and seen them all, but as I came to the outer wall of the city I suddenly saw in it a huge ivory gate. For a while I paused and admired it, then I came nearer and perceived the dreadful truth. The gate was carved out of one solid piece!

I fled at once through the gateway and down to the ship, and even as I ran I thought that I heard far off on the hills behind me the tramp of the fearful beast by whom that mass of ivory was shed, who was perhaps even then looking for his other tusk. When I was on the ship again I felt safer, and I said nothing to the sailors of what I had seen.

And now the captain was gradually awakening. Now night was rolling up from the East and North, and only the pinnacles of the towers of Perdóndaris still took the fallen sunlight. Then I went to the captain and told him quietly of the thing I had seen. And he questioned me at once about the gate, in a low voice, that the sailors might not know; and I told him how the weight of the thing was such that it could not have been brought from afar, and the captain knew that it had not been there a year ago. We agreed that such a beast could never have been killed by any assault of man, and that the gate must have been a fallen tusk, and one fallen near and recently. Therefore he decided that it were better to flee at once; so he commanded, and the sailors went to the sails, and others raised the anchor to the deck, and just as the highest pinnacle of marble lost the last rays of the sun we left Perdóndaris, that famous city. And night came down and cloaked Perdóndaris and hid it from our eyes, which as things have happened will never see it again; for I have heard since that something swift and wonderful has suddenly wrecked Perdóndaris in a day — towers, and walls, and people.

And the night deepened over the River Yann, a night all white with stars. And with the night there arose the helmsman's song. As soon as he had prayed he began to sing to cheer himself all through the lonely night. But first he prayed, praying the helmsman's prayer. And this is what I remember of it, rendered into English with a very feeble equivalent of the rhythm that seemed so resonant in those tropic nights

To whatever god may hear.

Wherever there be sailors whether of river or sea: whether their way be dark or whether through storm: whether their perils be of beast or of rock: or from enemy lurking on land or pursuing on sea: wherever the tiller is cold or the helmsman stiff: wherever sailors sleep or helmsman watch: guard, guide, and return us to the old land, that has known us: to the far homes that we know.

To all the gods that are.

To whatever god may hear.

So he prayed, and there was silence. And the sailors laid them down to rest for the night. The silence deepened, and was only broken by the ripples of Yann that lightly touched our prow. Sometimes some monster of the river coughed.

Silence and ripples, ripples and silence again.

And then his loneliness came upon the helmsman, and he began to sing. And he sang the market songs of Durl and Duz, and the old dragon-legends of Belzoond.

Many a song he sang, telling to spacious and exotic Yann the little tales and trifles of his city of Durl. And the songs welled up over the black jungle and came into the clear cold air above, and the great bands of stars that looked on Yann began to know the affairs of Durl and Duz, and of the shepherds that dwelt in the fields between, and the flocks that they had, and the loves that they had loved, and all the little things that they hoped to do. And as I lay wrapped up in skins and blankets listening to those songs, and watching the fantastic shapes of the great trees like to black giants stalking through the night, I suddenly fell asleep.

When I awoke great mists were trailing away from the Yann. And the flow of the river was tumbling now tumultuously, and little waves appeared; for Yann had scented from afar the ancient crags of Glorm, and knew that their ravines lay cool before him wherein he should meet the merry wild Irillion rejoicing from fields of snow. So he shook off from him the torpid sleep that had come upon him in the hot and scented jungle, and forgot its orchids and its butterflies, and swept on turbulent, expectant, strong; and soon the snowy peaks of the Hills of Glorm came glittering into view. And now the sailors were waking up from sleep. Soon we all ate, and then the helmsman laid him down to sleep while a comrade took his place, and they all spread over him their choicest furs.

And in a while we heard the sound that the Irillion made as she came down dancing from the fields of snow.

And then we saw the ravine in the Hills of Glorm lying precipitous and smooth before us, into which we were carried by the leaps of Yann. And now we left the steamy jungle and breathed the mountain air; the sailors stood up and took deep breaths of it, and thought of their own far-off Acroctian hills on which were Durl and Duz — below them in the plains stands fair Belzoond.

A great shadow brooded between the cliffs of Glorm, but the crags were shining above us like gnarled moons, and almost lit the gloom. Louder and louder came the Irillion's song, and the sound of her dancing down from the fields of snow. And soon we saw her white and full of mists, and wreathed with rainbows delicate and small that she had plucked up near the mountain's summit from some celestial garden of the Sun. Then she went away seawards with the huge grey Yann and the ravine widened, and opened upon the world, and our rocking ship came through to the light of day.

And all that morning and all the afternoon we passed through the marshes of Pondoovery; and Yann widened there, and flowed solemnly and slowly, and the captain bade the sailors beat on bells to overcome the dreariness of the marshes.

At last the Irusian Mountains came in sight, nursing the villages of Pen-Kai and Blut, and the wandering streets of Mlo, where priests propitiate the avalanche with wine and maize. Then the night came down over the plains of Tlun, and we saw the lights of Cappadarnia. We heard the Pathnites beating upon drums as we passed Imaut and Golzunda, then all but the helmsman slept. And villages scattered along the banks of the Yann heard all that night in the helmsman's unknown tongue the little songs of cities that they know not.

I awoke before dawn with a feeling that I was unhappy before I remembered why. Then I recalled that by the evening of the approaching day, according to all forseen probabilities, we should come to Bar-Wul-Yann, and I should part from the captain and his sailors. And I had liked the man because he had given me of his yellow wine that was set apart among his sacred things, and many a story he had told me about his fair Belzoond between the Acrotian hills and the Hian Min. And I had liked the ways that his sailors had, and the prayers that they prayed at evening side by side,

grudging not one another their alien gods. And I had a liking too for the tender way in which they often spoke of Durl and Duz, for it is good that men should love their native cities and the little hills that hold those cities up.

And I had come to know who would meet them when they returned to their homes, and where they thought the meetings would take place, some in a valley of the Acrotian hills where the road comes up from Yann, others in the gateway of one or another of the three cities, and others by the fireside in the home. And I thought of the danger that had menaced us all alike outside Perdóndaris, a danger that, as things have happened, was very real.

And I thought too of the helmsman's cheery song in the cold and lonely night, and how he had held our lives in his careful hands. And as I thought of this the helmsman ceased to sing, and I looked up and saw a pale light had appeared in the sky, and the lonely night had passed; and the dawn widened, and the sailors awoke.

And soon we saw the tide of the Sea himself advancing resolute between Yann's borders, and Yann sprang lithely at him and they struggled a while; then Yann and all that was his were pushed back northwards, so that the sailors had to hoist the sails, and the wind being favourable, we still held onwards.

And we passed Góndara and Narl and Hoz. And we saw memorable, holy Golnuz, and heard the pilgrims praying.

When we awoke after the midday rest we were coming near to Nen, the last of the cities in the River Yann. And the jungle was all about us once again, and about Nen; but the great Mloon ranges stood up over all things, and watched the city from beyond the jungle.

Here we anchored, and the captain and I went up into the city and found that the Wanderers had come into Nen.

And the Wanderers were a weird, dark, tribe, that once in every seven years came down from the peaks of Mloon, having crossed by a pass that is known to them from some fantastic land that lies beyond. And the people of Nen were all outside their houses, and all stood wondering at their own streets. For the men and women of the Wanderers had crowded all the ways, and every one was doing some strange thing. Some danced astounding

dances that they had learned from the desert wind, rapidly curving and swirling till the eye could follow no longer. Others played upon instruments beautiful wailing tunes that were full of horror, which souls had taught them lost by night in the desert, that strange far desert from which the Wanderers came.

None of their instruments were such as were known in Nen nor in any part of the region of the Yann; even the horns out of which some were made were of beasts that none had seen along the river, for they were barbed at the tips. And they sang, in the language of none, songs that seemed to be akin to the mysteries of night and to the unreasoned fear that haunts dark places.

Bitterly all the dogs of Nen distrusted them. And the Wanderers told one another fearful tales, for though no one in Nen knew aught of their language, yet they could see the fear on the listeners' faces, and as the tale wound on, the whites of their eyes showed vividly in terror as the eyes of some little beast whom the hawk has seized. Then the teller of the tale would smile and stop, and another would tell his story, and the teller of the first tale's lips would chatter with fear. And if some deadly snake chanced to appear the Wanderers would greet him like a brother, and the snake would seem to give his greetings to them before he passed on again. Once that most fierce and lethal of tropic snakes, the giant lythra, came out of the jungle and all down the street, the central street of Nen, and none of the Wanderers moved away from him, but they all played sonorously on drums, as though he had been a person of much honour; and the snake moved through the midst of them and smote none.

Even the Wanderers' children could do strange things, for if any one of them met with a child of Nen the two would stare at each other in silence with large grave eyes; then the Wanderers' child would slowly draw from his turban a live fish or snake. And the children of Nen could do nothing of that kind at all.

Much I should have wished to stay and hear the hymn with which they greet the night, that is answered by the wolves on the heights of Mloon, but it was now time to raise the anchor again that the captain might return from Bar-Wul-Yann upon the landward tide. So we went on board and continued down the Yann. And the captain and I spoke little, for we were thinking of our parting, which should be for long, and we watched instead the splendour of the westerning sun. For the sun was a ruddy gold, but a faint

mist cloaked the jungle, lying low, and into it poured the smoke of the little jungle cities, and the smoke of them met together in the mist and joined into one haze, which became purple, and was lit by the sun, as the thoughts of men become hallowed by some great and sacred thing. Sometimes one column from a lonely house would rise up higher than the cities' smoke, and gleam by itself in the sun.

And now as the sun's last rays were nearly level, we saw the sight that I had come to see, for from two mountains that stood on either shore two cliffs of pink marble came out into the river, all glowing in the light of the low sun, and they were quite smooth and of mountainous altitude, and they nearly met, and Yann went tumbling between them and found the sea.

And this was Bar-Wul-Yann, the Gate of Yann, and in the distance through that barrier's gap I saw the azure indescribable sea, where little fishing-boats went gleaming by.

And the sunset and the brief twilight came, and the exultation of the glory of Bar-Wul-Yann was gone, yet still the pink cliffs glowed, the fairest marvel that the eye beheld-and this in a land of wonders. And soon the twilight gave place to the coming out of stars, and the colours of Bar-Wul-Yann went dwindling away. And the sight of those cliffs was to me as some chord of music that a master's hand had launched from the violin, and which carries to Heaven of Faëry the tremulous spirits of men.

And now by the shore they anchored and went no farther, for they were sailors of the river and not of the sea, and knew the Yann but not the tides beyond.

And the time was come when the captain and I must part, he to go back again to his fair Belzoond in sight of the distant peaks of the Hian Min, and I to find my way by strange means back to those hazy fields that all poets know, wherein stand small mysterious cottages through whose windows, looking westwards, you may see the fields of men, and looking eastwards see glittering elfin mountains, tipped with snow, going range on range into the region of Myth, and beyond it into the kingdom of Fantasy, which pertain to the Lands of Dream. Long we should meet no more, for my fancy is weakening as the years slip by, and I go ever more seldom into the Lands of Dream. Then we clasped hands, uncouthly on his part, for it is not the method of greeting in his country, and he commended my soul to the care of his own gods, to his little lesser gods, the humble ones, to the gods that bless Belzoond.

A SHOP IN GO-BY STREET

I said I must go back to Yann again and see if *Bird of the River* still plies up and down and whether her bearded captain commands her still or whether he sits in the gate of fair Belzoond drinking at evening the marvellous yellow wine that the mountaineer brings down from the Hian Min. And I wanted to see the sailors again who came from Durl and Duz and to hear from their lips what befell Perdóndaris when its doom came up without warning from the hills and fell on that famous city. And I wanted to hear the sailors pray at night each to his own god, and to feel the wind of the evening coolly arise when the sun went flaming away from that exotic river. For I thought never again to see the tide of Yann, but when I gave up politics not long ago the wings of my fancy strengthened, though they had erstwhile drooped, and I had hopes of coming behind the East once more where Yann like a proud white war-horse goes through the Lands of Dream.

Yet I had forgotten the way to those little cottages on the edge of the fields we know whose upper windows, though dim with antique cobwebs, look out on the fields we know not and are the starting-point of all adventure in all the Lands of Dream.

I therefore made enquiries. And so I came to be directed to the shop of a dreamer who lives not far from the Embankment in the City. Among so many streets as there are in the city it is little wonder that there is one that has never been seen before; it is named Go-by Street and runs out of the Strand if you look very closely. Now when you enter this man's shop you do not go straight to the point but you ask him to sell you something, and if it is anything with which he can supply you he hands it you and wishes you good-morning. It is his way. And many have been deceived by asking for some unlikely thing, such as the oyster-shell from which was taken one of those single pearls that made the gates of Heaven in Revelations, and finding that the old man had it in stock.

He was comatose when I went into the shop, his heavy lids almost covered his little eyes; he sat, and his mouth was open. I said, "I want some of Abama and Pharpah, rivers of Damascus." "How much?" he said. "Two and a half yards of each, to be delivered to my flat." "That is very tiresome," he muttered, "very tiresome. We do not stock it in that quantity." "Then I will take all you have," I said.

He rose laboriously and looked among some bottles. I saw one labelled: Nilos, river of Ægyptos; and others Holy Ganges, Phlegethon, Jordan; I was almost afraid he had it, when I heard him mutter again, “This is very tiresome,” and presently he said, “We are out of it.” “Then,” I said, “I wish you to tell me the way to those little cottages in whose upper chambers poets look out upon the fields we know not, for I wish to go into the Land of Dream and to sail once more upon mighty, sea-like Yann.”

At that he moved heavily and slowly in way-worn carpet slippers, panting as he went, to the back part of his shop, and I went with him. This was a dingy lumber-room full of idols: the near end was dingy and dark but at the far end was a blue cærulean glow in which stars seemed to be shining and the heads of the idols glowed. “This,” said the fat old man in carpet slippers, “is the heaven of the gods who sleep.” I asked him what gods slept and he mentioned names that I had never heard as well as names that I knew. “All those,” he said, “that are not worshipped now are asleep.”

“Then does Time not kill the gods?” I said to him and he answered, “No. But for three or four thousand years a god is worshipped and for three or four he sleeps. Only Time is wakeful always.”

“But they that teach us of new gods” — I said to him, “are they not new?”

“They hear the old ones stirring in their sleep being about to wake, because the dawn is breaking and the priests crow. These are the happy prophets: unhappy are they that hear some old god speak while he sleeps still being deep in slumber, and prophesy and prophesy and no dawn comes, they are those that men stone saying, ‘Prophesy where this stone shall hit you, and this.’”

“Then shall Time never slay the gods,” I said. And he answered, “They shall die by the bedside of the last man. Then Time shall go mad in his solitude and shall not know his hours from his centuries of years and they shall clamour round him crying for recognition and he shall lay his stricken hands on their heads and stare at them blindly and say, ‘My children, I do not know you one from another,’ and at these words of Time empty worlds shall reel.”

And for some while then I was silent, for my imagination went out into those far years and looked back at me and mocked me because I was the creature of a day.

Suddenly I was aware by the old man's heavy breathing that he had gone to sleep. It was not an ordinary shop: I feared lest one of his gods should wake and call for him: I feared many things, it was so dark, and one or two of those idols were something more than grotesque. I shook the old man hard by one of his arms.

"Tell me the way to the cottages," I said, "on the edge of the fields we know."

"I don't think we can do that," he said.

"Then supply me," I said, "with the goods."

That brought him to his senses. He said, "You go out by the back door and turn to the right"; and he opened a little, old, dark door in the wall through which I went, and he wheezed and shut the door. The back of the shop was of incredible age. I saw in antique characters upon a mouldering board, "Licensed to sell weasels and jade earrings." The sun was setting now and shone on little golden spires that gleamed along the roof which had long ago been thatched and with a wonderful straw. I saw that the whole of Go-by Street had the same strange appearance when looked at from behind. The pavement was the same as the pavement of which I was weary and of which so many thousand miles lay the other side of those houses, but the street was of most pure untrampled grass with such marvellous flowers in it that they lured downward from great heights the flocks of butterflies as they traveled by, going I know not whence. The other side of the street there was pavement again but no houses of any kind, and what there was in place of them I did not stop to see, for I turned to my right and walked along the back of Go-by Street till I came to the open fields and the gardens of the cottages that I sought. Huge flowers went up out of these gardens like slow rockets and burst into purple blooms and stood there huge and radiant on six-foot stalks and softly sang strange songs. Others came up beside them and bloomed and began singing too. A very old witch came out of her cottage by the back door and into the garden in which I stood.

"What are these wonderful flowers?" I said to her.

"Hush! Hush!" she said, "I am putting the poets to bed. These flowers are their dreams."

And in a lower voice I said: "What wonderful songs are they singing?" and she said, "Be still and listen."

And I listened and found they were singing of my own childhood and of things that happened there so far away that I had quite forgotten them till I

heard the wonderful song.

“Why is the song so faint?” I said to her.

“Dead voices,” she said, “Dead voices,” and turned back again to her cottage saying: “Dead voices” still, but softly for fear that she should wake the poets. “They sleep so badly while they live,” she said.

I stole on tiptoe upstairs to the little room from whose windows, looking one way, we see the fields we know and, looking another, those hilly lands that I sought — almost I feared not to find them. I looked at once toward the mountains of faëry; the afterglow of the sunset flamed on them, their avalanches flashed on their violet slopes coming down tremendous from emerald peaks of ice; and there was the old gap in the blue-grey hills above the precipice of amethyst whence one sees the Lands of Dream.

All was still in the room where the poets slept when I came quietly down. The old witch sat by a table with a lamp, knitting a splendid cloak of gold and green for a king that had been dead a thousand years.

“Is it any use,” I said, “to the king that is dead that you sit and knit him a cloak of gold and green?”

“Who knows?” she said.

“What a silly question to ask,” said her old black cat who lay curled by the fluttering fire.

Already the stars were shining on that romantic land when I closed the witch’s door; already the glow-worms were mounting guard for the night around those magical cottages. I turned and trudged for the gap in the blue-grey mountains.

Already when I arrived some colour began to show in the amethyst precipice below the gap although it was not yet morning. I heard a rattling and sometimes caught a flash from those golden dragons far away below me that are the triumph of the goldsmiths of Sirdoo and were given life by the ritual incantations of the conjurer Amargrarn. On the edge of the opposite cliff, too near I thought for safety, I saw the ivory palace of Singanee that mighty elephant-hunter; small lights appeared in windows, the slaves were awake, and beginning with heavy eyelids the work of the day.

And now a ray of sunlight topped the world. Others than I must describe how it swept from the amethyst cliff the shadow of the black one that opposed it, how that one shaft of sunlight pierced the amethyst for leagues, and how the rejoicing colour leaped up to welcome the light and shot back a

purple glow on the walls of the palace of ivory while down in that incredible ravine the golden dragons still played in the darkness.

At this moment a female slave came out by a door of the palace and tossed a basket-full of sapphires over the edge. And when day was manifest on those marvellous heights and the flare of the amethyst precipice filled the abyss, then the elephant-hunter arose in his ivory palace and took his terrific spear and going out by a landward door went forth to avenge Perdóndaris

I turned then and looked upon the lands of Dream, and the thin white mist that never rolls quite away was shifting in the morning. Rising like isles above it I saw the Hills of Hap and the city of copper, old, deserted Bethmoora, and Utnar Véhi and Kyph and Mandaroon and the wandering leagues of Yann. Rather I guessed than saw the Hian Min whose imperturbable and aged heads scarce recognize for more than clustered mounds the round Acroctian hills, that are heaped about their feet and that shelter, as I remembered, Durl and Duz. But most clearly I discerned that ancient wood through which one going down to the bank of Yann whenever the moon is old may come on *Bird of the River* anchored there, waiting three days for travellers, as has been prophesied of her. And as it was now that season I hurried down from the gap in the blue-grey hills by an elfin path that was coeval with fable, and came by means of it to the edge of the wood. Black though the darkness was in that ancient wood the beasts that moved in it were blacker still. It is very seldom that any dreamer travelling in Lands of Dream is ever seized by these beasts, and yet I ran; for if a man's spirit is seized in the Lands of Dream his body may survive it for many years and well know the beasts that mouthed him far away and the look in their little eyes and the smell of their breath; that is why the recreation field at Hanwell is so dreadfully trodden into restless paths.

And so I came at last to the sea-like flood of proud, tremendous Yann, with whom there tumbled streams from incredible lands — with these he went by singing. Singing he carried drift-wood and whole trees, fallen in far-away, unvisited forests, and swept them mightily by, but no sign was there either out in the river or in the olden anchorage near by of the ship I came to see.

And I built myself a hut and roofed it over with the huge abundant leaves of a marvellous weed and ate the meat that grows on the targar-tree and waited there three days. And all day long the river tumbled by and all night

long the tolulu-bird sang on and the huge fireflies had no other care than to pour past in torrents of dancing sparks, and nothing rippled the surface of the Yann by day and nothing disturbed the tolulu-bird by night. I know not what I feared for the ship I sought and its friendly captain who came from fair Belzoond and its cheery sailors out of Durl and Duz; all day long I looked for it on the river and listened for it by night until the dancing fireflies danced me to sleep. Three times only in those three nights the tolulu-bird was scared and stopped his song, and each time I awoke with a start and found no ship and saw that he was only scared by the dawn. Those indescribable dawns upon the Yann came up like flames in some land over the hills where a magician burns by secret means enormous amethysts in a copper pot. I used to watch them in wonder while no bird sang — till all of a sudden the sun came over a hill and every bird but one began to sing, and the tolulu-bird slept fast, till out of an opening eye he saw the stars.

I would have waited three more days, but on the third day I had gone in my loneliness to see the very spot where first I met *Bird of the River* at her anchorage with her bearded captain sitting on the deck. And as I looked at the black mud of the harbour and pictured in my mind that band of sailors whom I had not seen for two years, I saw an old hulk peeping from the mud. The lapse of centuries seemed partly to have rotted and partly to have buried in the mud all but the prow of the boat and on the prow I faintly saw a name. I read it slowly — it was *Bird of the River*. And then I knew that, while in Ireland and London two years had barely passed over my head, ages had gone over the region of Yann and wrecked and rotted that once familiar ship, and buried years ago the bones of the youngest of my friends, who so often sang to me of Durl and Duz or told the dragon-legends of Belzoond. For beyond the world we know there roars a hurricane of centuries whose echo only troubles — though sorely — our fields; while elsewhere there is calm. I stayed a moment by that battered hulk and said a prayer for whatever may be immortal of those who were wont to sail it down the Yann, and I prayed for them to the gods to whom they loved to pray, to the little lesser gods that bless Belzoond. Then leaving the hut that I built to those ravenous years I turned my back to the Yann and entering the forest at evening just as its orchids were opening their petals to perfume the night came out of it in the morning, and passed that day along the amethyst gulf by the gap in the blue-grey mountains. I wondered if Singanee, that mighty elephant-hunter, had returned again with his spear to his lofty ivory

palace or if his doom had been one with that of Perdóndaris. I saw a merchant at a small back door selling new sapphires as I passed the palace, then I went on and came as twilight fell to those small cottages where the elfin mountains are in sight of the fields we know. And I went to the old witch that I had seen before and she sat in her parlour with a red shawl round her shoulders still knitting the golden cloak, and faintly through one of her windows the elfin mountains shone and I saw again through another the fields we know.

"Tell me something," I said, "of this strange land!"

"How much do you know?" she said. "Do you know that dreams are illusion?"

"Of course I do," I said. "Every one knows that."

"Oh no they don't," she said, "the mad don't know it."

"That is true," I said.

"And do you know," she said, "that Life is illusion?"

"Of course it is not," I said. "Life is real, Life is earnest —— ."

At that the witch and her cat (who had not moved from her old place by the hearth) burst into laughter. I stayed some time, for there was much that I wished to ask, but when I saw that the laughter would not stop I turned and went away.

THE AVENGER OF PERDÓNDARIS

I was rowing on the Thames not many days after my return from the Yann and drifting eastwards with the fall of the tide away from Westminster Bridge, near which I had hired my boat. All kinds of things were on the water with me — sticks drifting, and huge boats — and I was watching, so absorbed the traffic of that great river that I did not notice I had come to the City until I looked up and saw that part of the Embankment that is nearest to Go-by Street. And then I suddenly wondered what befell Singanee, for there was a stillness about his ivory palace when I passed it by, which made me think that he had not then returned. And though I had seen him go forth with his terrific spear, and mighty elephant-hunter though he was, yet his was a fearful quest for I knew that it was none other than to avenge Perdóndaris by slaying that monster with the single tusk who had overthrown it suddenly in a day. So I tied up my boat as soon as I came to some steps, and landed and left the Embankment, and about the third street I came to I began to look for the opening of Go-by Street; it is very narrow, you hardly notice it at first, but there it was, and soon I was in the old man's shop. But a young man leaned over the counter. He had no information to give me about the old man — he was sufficient in himself. As to the little old door in the back of the shop, "We know nothing about that, sir." So I had to talk to him and humour him. He had for sale on the counter an instrument for picking up a lump of sugar in a new way. He was pleased when I looked at it and he began to praise it. I asked him what was the use of it, and he said that it was of no use but that it had only been invented a week ago and was quite new and was made of real silver and was being very much bought. But all the while I was straying towards the back of the shop. When I enquired about the idols there he said that they were some of the season's novelties and were a choice selection of mascots; and while I made a pretence of selecting one I suddenly saw the wonderful old door. I was through it at once and the young shop-keeper after me. No one was more surprised than he when he saw the street of grass and the purple flowers on it; he ran across in his frock-coat on to the opposite pavement and only just stopped in time, for the world ended there. Looking downward over the pavement's edge he saw, instead of accustomed kitchen-windows, white clouds and a wide, blue sky. I led him to the old back door of the

shop, looking pale and in need of air, and pushed him lightly and he went limply through, for I thought the air was better for him on the side of the street that he knew. As soon as the door was shut on that astonished man I turned to the right and went along the street till I saw the gardens and the cottages, and a little red patch moving in a garden, which I knew to be the old witch wearing her shawl.

"Come for a change of illusion again?" she said.

"I have come from London," I said. "And I want to see Singanee. I want to go to his ivory palace over the elfin mountains where the amethyst precipice is."

"Nothing like changing your illusions," she said, "or you grow tired. London's a fine place but one wants to see the elfin mountains sometimes."

"Then you know London?" I said.

"Of course I do," she said. "I can dream as well as you. You are not the only person that can imagine London." Men were toiling dreadfully in her garden; it was in the heat of the day and they were digging with spades; she suddenly turned from me to beat one of them over the back with a long black stick that she carried. "Even my poets go to London sometimes," she said to me.

"Why did you beat that man?" I said.

"To make him work," she answered.

"But he is tired," I said.

"Of course he is," said she.

And I looked and saw that the earth was difficult and dry and that every spadeful that the tired men lifted was full of pearls; but some men sat quite still and watched the butterflies that flitted about the garden and the old witch did not beat them with her stick. And when I asked her who the diggers were she said, "These are my poets, they are digging for pearls." And when I asked her what so many pearls were for she said to me: "To feed the pigs of course."

"But do the pigs like pearls?" I said to her.

"Of course they don't," she said. And I would have pressed the matter further but the old black cat had come out of the cottage and was looking at me whimsically and saying nothing so that I knew I was asking silly questions. And I asked instead why some of the poets were idle and were watching butterflies without being beaten. And she said: "The butterflies know where the pearls are hidden and they are waiting for one to alight

above the buried treasure. They cannot dig until they know where to dig." And all of a sudden a faun came out of a rhododendron forest and began to dance upon a disk of bronze in which a fountain was set; and the sound of his two hooves dancing on the bronze was beautiful as bells.

"Tea-bell," said the witch; and all the poets threw down their spades and followed her into the house, and I followed them; but the witch and all of us followed the black cat, who arched his back and lifted his tail and walked along the garden-path of blue enamelled tiles and through the black-thatched porch and the open, oaken door and into a little room where tea was ready. And in the garden the flowers began to sing and the fountain tinkled on the disk of bronze. And I learned that the fountain came from an otherwise unknown sea, and sometimes it threw gilded fragments up from the wrecks of unheard-of galleons, foundered in storms of some sea that was nowhere in the world; or battered to bits in wars waged with we know not whom. Some said that it was salt because of the sea and others that it was salt with mariners' tears. And some of the poets took large flowers out of vases and threw their petals all about the room, and others talked two at a time and other sang. "Why they are only children after all," I said.

"Only children!" repeated the old witch who was pouring out cowslip wine.

"Only children," said the old black cat. And every one laughed at me.

"I sincerely apologize," I said. "I did not mean to say it. I did not intend to insult any one."

"Why he knows nothing at all," said the old black cat. And everybody laughed till the poets were put to bed.

And then I took one look at the fields we know, and turned to the other window that looks on the elfin mountains. And the evening looked like a sapphire. And I saw my way though the fields were growing dim, and when I found it I went downstairs and through the witch's parlour, and out of doors and came that night to the palace of Singanee.

Lights glittered through every crystal slab — and all were uncurtained — in the palace of ivory. The sounds were those of a triumphant dance. Very haunting indeed was the booming of a bassoon, and like the dangerous advance of some galloping beast were the blows wielded by a powerful man on the huge, sonourous drum. It seemed to me as I listened that the contest of Singanee with the more than elephantine destroyer of Perdóndaris had already been set to music. And as I walked in the dark along the amethyst

precipice I suddenly saw across it a curved white bridge. It was one ivory tusk. And I knew it for the triumph of Singanee. I knew at once that this curved mass of ivory that had been dragged by ropes to bridge the abyss was the twin of the ivory gate that once Perdóndaris had, and had itself been the destruction of that once famous city — towers and walls and people. Already men had begun to hollow it and to carve human figures life-size along its sides. I walked across it; and half way across, at the bottom of the curve, I met a few of the carvers fast asleep. On the opposite cliff by the palace lay the thickest end of the tusk and I came down a ladder which leaned against the tusk for they had not yet carved steps.

Outside the ivory palace it was as I had supposed and the sentry at the gate slept heavily; and though I asked of him permission to enter the palace he only muttered a blessing on Singanee and fell asleep again. It was evident that he had been drinking bak. Inside the ivory hall I met with servitors who told me that any stranger was welcome there that night, because they extolled the triumph of Singanee. And they offered me bak to drink to commemorate the splendour but I did not know its power nor whether a little or much prevailed over a man so I said that I was under an oath to a god to drink nothing beautiful; and they asked me if he could not be appeased by a prayer, and I said, “In nowise,” and went towards the dance; and they commiserated me and abused that god bitterly, thinking to please me thereby, and then they fell to drinking bak to the glory of Singanee. Outside the curtains that hung before the dance there stood a chamberlain and when I told him that though a stranger there, yet I was well known to Mung and Sish and Kib, the gods of Pegana, whose signs I made, he bade me ample welcome. Therefore I questioned him about my clothes asking if they were not unsuitable to so august an occasion and he swore by the spear that had slain the destroyer of Perdóndaris that Singanee would think it a shameful thing that any stranger not unknown to the gods should enter the dancing hall unsuitably clad; and therefore he led me to another room and took silken robes out of an old sea-chest of black and seamy oak with green copper hasps that were set with a few pale sapphires, and requested me to choose a suitable robe. And I chose a bright green robe, with an under-robe of light blue which was seen here and there, and a light blue sword-belt. I also wore a cloak that was dark purple with two thin strips of dark-blue along the border and a row of large dark sapphires sewn along the purple between them; it hung down from my shoulders behind

me. Nor would the chamberlain of Singanee let me take any less than this, for he said that not even a stranger, on that night, could be allowed to stand in the way of his master's munificence which he was pleased to exercise in honour of his victory. As soon as I was attired we went to the dancing hall and the first thing that I saw in that tall, scintillant chamber was the huge form of Singanee standing among the dancers and the heads of the men no higher than his waist. Bare were the huge arms that had held the spear that had avenged Perdóndaris. The chamberlain led me to him and I bowed, and said that I gave thanks to the gods to whom he looked for protection; and he said that he had heard my gods well spoken of by those accustomed to pray but this he said only of courtesy, for he knew not whom they were.

Singanee was simply dressed and only wore on his head a plain gold band to keep his hair from falling over his forehead, the ends of the gold were tied in the back with a bow of purple silk. But all his queens wore crowns of great magnificence, though whether they were crowned as the queens of Singanee or whether queens were attracted there from the thrones of distant lands by the wonder of him and the splendour I did not know.

All there wore silken robes of brilliant colours and the feet of all were bare and very shapely for the custom of boots was unknown in those regions. And when they saw that my big toes were deformed in the manner of Europeans, turning inwards towards the others instead of being straight, one or two asked sympathetically if an accident had befallen me. And rather than tell them truly that deforming out big toes was our custom and our pleasure I told them that I was under the curse of a malignant god at whose feet I had neglected to offer berries in infancy. And to some extent I justified myself, for Convention is a god though his ways are evil; and had I told them the truth I would not have been understood. They gave me a lady to dance with who was of marvellous beauty, she gold me that her name was Saranoora, a princess from the North, who had been sent as tribute to the palace of Singanee. And partly she danced as Europeans dance and partly as the fairies of the waste who lure, as legend has it, lost travellers to their doom. And if I could get thirty heathen men out of fantastic lands, with their long black hair and little elfin eyes and instruments of music even unknown to Nebuchadnezzar the King; and if I could make them play those tunes that I heard in the ivory palace on some lawn, gentle reader, at evening near your house then you would understand the beauty of Saranoora and the blaze of light and colour in that stupendous hall and the

lithesome movement of those mysterious queens that danced round Singanee. Then gentle reader you would be gentle no more but the thoughts that run like leopards over the far free lands would come leaping into your head even were it London, yes, even in London: you would rise up then and beat your hands on the wall with its pretty pattern of flowers, in the hope that the bricks might break and reveal the way to that palace of ivory by the amethyst gulf where the golden dragons are. For there have been men who have burned prisons down that the prisoners might escape, and even such incendiaries those dark musicians are who dangerously burn down custom that the pining thoughts may go free. Let your elders have no fear, have no fear. I will not play those tunes in any streets we know. I will not bring those strange musicians here, I will only whisper the way to the Lands of Dream, and only a few frail feet shall find the way, and I shall dream alone of the beauty of Saranoora and sometimes sigh. We danced on and on at the will of the thirty musicians, but when the stars were paling and the wind that knew the dawn was ruffling up the edge of the skirts of night, then Saranoora the princess of the North led me out into a garden. Dark groves of trees were there which filled the night with perfume and guarded night's mysteries from the arising dawn. There floated over us, wandering in that garden, the triumphant melody of those dark musicians, whose origin was unguessed even by those that dwelt there and knew the Lands of Dream. For only a moment once sang the tolulu-bird, for the festival of that night had scared him and he was silent. For only a moment once we heard him singing in some far grove because the musicians rested and our bare feet made no sound; for a moment we heard that bird of which once our nightingale dreamed and handed on the tradition to his children. And Saranoora told me that they have named the bird the Sister of Song; but for the musicians, who presently played again, she said they had no name, for no one knew who they were or from what country. Then some one sang quite near us in the darkness to an instrument of strings telling of Singanee and his battle against the monster. And soon we saw him sitting on the ground and singing to the night of that spear-thrust that had found the thumping heart of the destroyer of Perdóndaris; and we stopped awhile and asked him who had seen so memorable a struggle and he answered none but Singanee and he whose tusk had scattered Perdóndaris, and now the last was dead. And when we asked him if Singanee had told him of the struggle he said that that proud hunter would say no word about it and that therefore

his mighty deed was given to the poets and become their trust forever, and he struck again his instrument of strings and sang on.

When the strings of pearls that hung down from her neck began to gleam all over Saranoora I knew that dawn was near and that that memorable night was all but gone. And at last we left the garden and came to the abyss to see the sunrise shine on the amethyst cliff. And at first it lit up the beauty of Saranoora and then it topped the world and blazed upon those cliffs of amethyst until it dazzled our eyes, and we turned from it and saw the workman going out along the tusk to hollow it and to carve a balustrade of fair professional figures. And those who had drunken bak began to awake and to open their dazzled eyes at the amethyst precipice and to rub them and turn them away. And now those wonderful kingdoms of song that the dark musicians established all night by magical chords dropped back again to the sway of that ancient silence who ruled before the gods, and the musicians wrapped their cloaks about them and covered up their marvellous instruments and stole away to the plains; and no one dared ask them whither they went or why they dwelt there, or what god they served. And the dance stopped and all the queens departed. And then the female slave came out again by a door and emptied her basket of sapphires down the abyss as I saw her do before. Beautiful Saranoora said that those great queens would never wear their sapphires more than once and that every day at noon a merchant from the mountains sold new ones for that evening. Yet I suspected that something more than extravagance lay at the back of that seemingly wasteful act of tossing sapphires into an abyss, for thee were in the depths of it those two dragons of gold of whom nothing seemed to be known. And I thought, and I think so still, that Singanee, terrific though he was in war with the elephants, from whose tusks he had built his palace, well knew and even feared those dragons in the abyss, and perhaps valued those priceless jewels less than he valued his queens, and that he to whom so many lands paid beautiful tribute out of their dread of his spear, himself paid tribute to the golden dragons. Whether those dragons had wings I could not see; nor, if they had, could I tell if they could bear that weight of solid gold from the abyss; nor by what paths they could crawl from it did I know. And I know not what use to a golden dragon should sapphires be or a queen. Only it seemed strange to me that so much wealth of jewels should be thrown by command of a man who had nothing to fear — to fall flashing and changing their colours at dawn into an abyss.

I do not know how long we lingered there watching the sunrise on those miles of amethyst. And it is strange that that great and famous wonder did not move me more than it did, but my mind was dazzled by the fame of it and my eyes were actually dazzled by the blaze, and as often happens I thought more of little things and remember watching the daylight in the solitary sapphire that Saranoora had and that she wore upon her finger in a ring. Then, the dawn wind being all about her, she said that she was cold and turned back into the ivory palace. And I feared that we might never meet again, for time moves differently over the Lands of Dream than over the fields we know; like ocean-currents going different ways and bearing drifting ships. And at the doorway of the ivory palace I turned to say farewell and yet I found no words that were suitable to say. And often now when I stand in other lands I stop and think of many things to have said; yet all I said was "Perhaps we shall meet again." And she said that it was likely that we should often meet for that this was a little thing for the gods to permit not knowing that the gods of the Lands of Dream have little power upon the fields we know. Then she went in through the doorway. And having exchanged for my own clothes again the raiment that the chamberlain had given me I turned from the hospitality of mighty Singanee and set my face towards the fields we know. I crossed that enormous tusk that had been the end of Perdóndaris and met the artists carving it as I went; and some by way of greeting as I passed extolled Singanee, and in answer I gave honour to his name. Daylight had not yet penetrated wholly to the bottom of the abyss but the darkness was giving place to a purple haze and I could faintly see one golden dragon there. Then looking once towards the ivory palace, and seeing no one at the windows, I turned sorrowfully away, and going by the way that I knew passed through the gap in the mountains and down their slopes till I came again in sight of the witch's cottage. And as I went to the upper window to look for the fields we know, the witch spoke to me; but I was cross, as one newly waked from sleep, and I would not answer her. Then the cat questioned me as to whom I had met, and I answered him that in the fields we know cats kept their place and did not speak to man. And then I came downstairs and walked straight out of the door, heading for Go-by Street. "You are going the wrong way," the witch called through the window; and indeed I had sooner gone back to the ivory palace again, but I had no right to trespass any further on the hospitality of Singanee and one cannot stay always in the Lands of Dream, and what

knowledge had that old witch of the call of the fields we know or the little though many snares that bind our feet therein? So I paid no heed to her, but kept on, and came to Go-by Street. I saw the house with the green door some way up the street but thinking that the near end of the street was closer to the Embankment where I had left my boat I tried the first door I came to, a cottage thatched like the rest, with little golden spires along the roof-ridge, and strange birds sitting there and preening marvellous feathers. The door opened, and to my surprise I found myself in what seemed like a shepherd's cottage; a man who was sitting on a log of wood in a little low dark room said something to me in an alien language. I muttered something and hurried through to the street. The house was thatched in front as well as behind. There were not golden spires in front, no marvellous birds; but there was no pavement. There was a row of houses, byres, and barns but no other sign of a town. Far off I saw one or two little villages. Yet there was the river — and no doubt the Thames, for it was the width of the Thames and had the curves of it, if you can imagine the Thames in that particular spot without a city around it, without any bridges, and the Embankment fallen in. I saw that there had happened to me permanently and in the light of day some such thing as happens to a man, but to a child more often, when he awakes before morning in some strange room and sees a high, grey window where the door ought to be and unfamiliar objects in wrong places and though knowing where he is yet knows not how it can be that the place should look like that.

A flock of sheep came by me presently looking the same as ever, but the man who led them had a wild, strange look. I spoke to him and he did not understand me. Then I went down to the river to see if my boat was there and at the very spot where I had left it, in the mud (for the tide was low) I saw a half-buried piece of blackened wood that might have been part of a boat, but I could not tell. I began to feel that I had missed the world. It would be a strange thing to travel from far away to see London and not be able to find it among all the roads that lead there, but I seemed to have travelled in Time and to have missed it among the centuries. And when as I wandered over the grassy hills I came on a wattled shrine that was thatched with straw and saw a lion in it more worn with time than even the Sphinx at Gizeh and when I knew it for one of the four in Trafalgar Square then I saw that I was stranded far away in the future with many centuries of treacherous years between me and anything that I had known. And then I sat

on the grass by the worn paws of the lion to think out what to do. And I decided to go back through Go-by Street and, since there was nothing left to keep me any more to the fields we know, to offer myself as a servant in the palace of Singanee, and to see again the face of Saranoora and those famous, wonderful, amethystine dawns upon the abyss where the golden dragons play. And I stayed no longer to look for remains of the ruins of London; for there is little pleasure in seeing wonderful things if there is no one at all to hear of them and to wonder. So I returned at once to Go-by Street, the little row of huts, and saw no other record that London had been except that one stone lion. I went to the right house this time. It was very much altered and more like one of those huts that one sees on Salisbury plain than a shop in the city of London, but I found it by counting the houses in the street for it was still a row of houses though pavement and city were gone. And it was still a shop. A very different shop to the one I knew, but things were for sale there — shepherd's crooks, food, and rude axes. And a man with long hair was there who was clad in skins. I did not speak to him for I did not know his language. He said to me something that sounded like "Everkike." It conveyed no meaning to me; but when he looked towards one of his buns, light suddenly dawned in my mind, and I knew that England was even England still and that still she was not conquered, and that though they had tired of London they still held to their land; for the words that the man had said were, "Av er kike," and then I knew that that very language that was carried to distant lands by the old, triumphant cockney was spoken still in his birthplace and that neither his politics nor his enemies had destroyed him after all these thousand years. I had always disliked the Cockney dialect — and with the arrogance of the Irishman who hears from rich and poor the English of the splendour of Elizabeth; and yet when I heard those words my eyes felt sore as with impending tears — it should be remembered how far away I was. I think I was silent for a little while. Suddenly I saw that the man who kept the shop was asleep. That habit was strangely like the ways of a man who if he were then alive would be (if I could judge from the time-worn look of the lion) over a thousand years old. But then how old was I? It is perfectly clear that Time moves over the Lands of Dream swifter or slower than over the fields we know. For the dead, and the long dead, live again in our dreams; and a dreamer passes through the events of days in a single moment of the Town-Hall's clock. Yet logic did not aid me and my mind was puzzled. While the

old man slept — and strangely like in face he was to the old man who had shown me first the little, old backdoor — I went to the far end of his wattled shop. There was a door of a sort on leather hinges. I pushed it open and there I was again under the notice-board at the back of the shop, at least the back of Go-by Street had not changed. Fantastic and remote though this grass street was with its purple flowers and the golden spires, and the world ending at its opposite pavement, yet I breathed more happily to see something again that I had seen before. I thought I had lost forever the world I knew, and now that I was at the back of Go-by Street again I felt the loss less than when I was standing where familiar things ought to be; and I turned my mind to what was left me in the vast Lands of Dream and thought of Saranoora. And when I saw the cottages again I felt less lonely even at the thought of the cat though he generally laughed at the things I said. And the first thing that I saw when I saw the witch was that I had lost the world and was going back for the rest of my days to the palace of Singanee. And the first thing that she said was: "Why! You've been through the wrong door," quite kindly for she saw how unhappy I looked. And I said, "Yes, but it's all the same street. The whole street's altered and London's gone and the people I used to know and the houses I used to rest in, and everything; and I'm tired."

"What did you want to go through the wrong door for?" she said.

"O, that made no difference," I said.

"O, didn't it?" she said in a contradictory way.

"Well I wanted to get to the near end of the street so as to find my boat quickly by the Embankment. And now my boat, and the Embankment and — and —— ."

"Some people are always in such a hurry," said the old black cat. And I felt too unhappy to be angry and I said nothing more.

And the old witch said, "Now which way do you want to go?" and she was talking rather like a nurse to a small child. And I said, "I have nowhere to go."

And she said, "Would you rather go home or go to the ivory palace of Singanee." And I said, "I've got a headache, and I don't want to go anywhere, and I'm tired of the Lands of Dream."

"Then suppose you try going in through the right door," she said.

“That’s no good,” I said. “Everyone’s dead and gone, and they’re selling buns there.”

“What do you know about Time?” she said.

“Nothing,” answered the old, black cat, though nobody spoke to him.

“Run along,” said the old witch.

So I turned and trudged away to Go-by Street again. I was very tired. “What does he know about anything?” said the old black cat behind me. I knew what he was going to say next. He waited a moment and then said, “Nothing.” When I looked over my shoulder he was strutting back to the cottage. And when I got to Go-by Street I listlessly opened the door through which I had just now come. I saw no use in doing it, I just did wearily as I was told. And the moment I got inside I saw it was just the same as of old, and the sleepy old man was there who sold idols. And I bought a vulgar thing that I did not want, for the sheer joy of seeing accustomed things. And when I turned from Go-by Street which was just the same as ever, the first thing that I saw was a taximeter running into a hansom cab. And I took off my hat and cheered. And I went to the Embankment and there was my boat, and the stately river full of dirty, accustomed things. And I rowed back and bought a penny paper, (I had been away it seemed for one day) and I read it from cover to cover — patent remedies for incurable illnesses and all — and I determined to walk, as soon as I was rested, in all the streets that I knew and to call on all the people that I had ever met, and to be content for long with the fields we know.

The Short Stories



Dunsany Castle, in Dunsany, Meath, Ireland – the family seat of the Barons of Dunsany, the second-oldest title in the Irish Peerage

LIST OF SHORT STORIES IN CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER



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The Plays



The Abbey Theatre, Dublin, Ireland's National Theatre, opened in 1904. Dunsany was a major donor and went on to become a highly successful dramatist.

FIVE PLAYS



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INTRODUCTION

Observation and imagination are the basic principles of all poetry. It is impossible to conceive a poetical work from which one of them is wholly absent. Observation without imagination makes for obviousness; imagination without observation turns into nonsense. What marks the world's greatest poetry is perhaps the presence in almost equal proportion of both these principles. But as a rule we find one of them predominating, and from this one-sided emphasis the poetry of the period derives its character as realistic or idealistic.

The poetry of the middle nineteenth century made a fetish of observation. It came as near excluding imagination as it could without ceasing entirely to be poetry. That such exaggeration should sooner or later result in a sharp reaction was natural. The change began during the eighties and gathered full headway in the early nineties. Imagination, so long scorned, came into its rights once more, and it is rapidly becoming the dominant note in the literary production of our own day.

The new movement has been called "neo-romantic" and "symbolistic." Both these names apply, but neither of them exhausts the contents or meaning of the movement which received its first impetus from Ibsen and which later found its typical embodiment in Maeterlinck. From this movement came much of the inspiration that produced the poetical re-birth of Ireland out of which has sprung the man whom I have now the pleasure of introducing to American readers: a man with imagination as elfish as moonlight mist.

Edward John Moreton Drax Plunkett, Lord Dunsany, is the eighteenth member of his family to bear the title which gives him a place in the Irish peerage. He was born in 1878 and received his education at Eton and Sandhurst. In 1899 he succeeded his father to the title and the family estate in Meath, Ireland. During the South African war he served at the front with the Coldstream Guards. He is passionately fond of outdoor life and often spends the whole day in the saddle before sitting down at his desk to write late at night.

His work proves, however, that he is as fond of spiritual as of physical exercise, and that he is an inveterate traveller in those mysterious regions of the partly known or wholly unknown where the imagination alone can

guide us. His first literary heroes were the brothers Grimm and Andersen. Then the Greek world of Olympians was revealed to him, making a lasting impression on his mind. But it was the Bible that gave him the limpid style which makes his most fantastic tales as real as government reports — or rather much more so. “For years no style seemed to me natural but that of the Bible,” he said not long ago, “and I feared that I would never become a writer when I saw that other people did not use it.”

For something like ten years he has been a pretty frequent and increasingly valued contributor to English and Anglo-Irish periodicals. He has previously published five volumes: “The Gods of Pegana,” 1905; “Time and the Gods,” 1906; “The Sword of Welleran,” 1908; “A Dreamer’s Tales,” 1910; and “The Book of Wonder,” 1912. All are collections of prose pieces that defy accepted classifications. They are fairy tales and short stories and essays and prose poems at the same time.

The reader has only to take a brief glance at one of those works to make the astounding discovery that he is being introduced to worlds of which he has never heard before. Even the “Arabian Nights” have a clearly identifiable background of popular legend and myth. Nothing of the kind is to be found in the writings of Lord Dunsany. He may be said to have created a new mythology wholly his own. He is not only the master but the maker of the countries to which he takes us on such fascinating jaunts. His commonest name for them is the Edge of the World, but sometimes he speaks of them as the Lands of Wonder. This latter name is doubly significant, for the whole movement of which he forms such a striking manifestation has been defined as a “renascence of wonder.”

The names of places and persons appearing in the stories of Lord Dunsany are worth a study in themselves. There are hundreds of them, giving evidence of an inexhaustible imagination; and each one of them is as aptly suggestive as if generations of men had been at work shaping them. To hear of Sardathion, the city built by the Gods of Old, is to see its domes of marble rising sky-high in the sunset-lighted air. To hear of Slith and Sippy and Slorg, the three thieves who went to the Edge of the World in quest of the Golden Box, is to feel as if one were dealing with historical characters like Aaron Burr or Chinese Gordon. And as we learn more about them, these fanciful creatures of Lord Dunsany’s brain assume still more familiar characteristics, as if they had been studied in some Irish village or English street. It is this fact that reveals one of the main secrets of Lord

Dunsany's appeal: that behind all his exuberant imagination lies a solid basis of observation, enabling him to endow the most impossible adventures with a homely and convincing air.

The five plays contained in the present volume have all been produced on the stage. "The Golden Doom" and "The Gods of the Mountain" have been staged most successfully at the Haymarket Theatre, London. "King Argimēnēs" and "The Glittering Gate" have been given by the Irish Players, and "The Lost Silk Hat" has been put on by Iden Payne at Manchester. In America, the first three have been in the repertoire of Stuart Walker's Portmanteau Theatre, and "The Glittering Gate" has been given by the Neighborhood Players.

After seeing "The Gods of the Mountain," Frank Harris wrote: "It was one of the nights of my life; the only play, I said to myself, which meant anything to me in twenty years or more." Without sharing the opinion of Mr. Harris about the dramatic output of the last twenty years, I share fully his enthusiasm in regard to the play that caused his remark. The note struck in it is so distinctly new as to make one gasp as under a sharp shock. But the surprise turns quickly into pleasure such as only the originality of genius can confer.

It is hard to define just what makes these plays what they are. But certain qualities are tangible. Their deep and rich symbolism is one. It is the kind of symbolism for which the advances of modern psychology had prepared us — the kind that is inseparable from life itself as we are only just beginning to understand it. Another quality is their capacity for suggesting at once the intimate unity and appalling vastness of life. In "The Golden Doom" the fate of an empire and a little boy's desire for a new plaything become linked as facts of equal importance in the web of fate. In "The Gods of the Mountain" we meet with an atmosphere of fatality comparable only to that found in the Greek dramas. The crime of *hybris*, which to the Greeks was the "unforgivable sin," is here made as real to us as it was to them.

But these remarks of mine about the inner significance of the plays should not tempt anybody into thinking them deficient in that element of formal perfection without which they could not be classed as works of art. They are, indeed, "things of beauty," and their beauty inheres in their design as well as in their style. Through all of them the greatest possible economy of means has been observed, so that not a word, not a tone, not a gesture is wasted in obtaining the effect aimed at. The dialogue of Maeterlinck is

suggested, but not more than suggested. The words spoken by the characters of Maeterlinck are often so vague as to be practically meaningless. The characters of Lord Dunsany speak as simply as those of Maeterlinck, but always sharply to the point; there can be no mistaking of what they mean, and that meaning serves always to carry the action of the play forward. And each play of Lord Dunsany's is an exciting adventure, conveying to the reader an exhilarating sense of motion without ever descending to old-fashioned stage tricks for the production of that sense. This means that they combine to an extraordinary degree the qualities which make separately for theatrical or literary success.

Edwin Björkman.

THE GODS OF THE MOUNTAIN

PERSONS

Agmar }
Slag }
Ulf }
Oogno } *Beggars*
Thahn }
Mlan }
A Thief }

Oorander }
Illanaun } *Citizens*
Akmos }

The Dromedary Men
Citizens, etc.
The Others

Scene: The East

THE FIRST ACT

Outside a city wall. Three beggars are seated upon the ground.

OOGNO
These days are bad for beggary.

THAHN
They are bad.

ULF (*an older beggar but not gray*)
Some evil has befallen the rich ones of this city. They take no joy any longer in benevolence, but are become sour and miserly at heart. Alas for them! I sometimes sigh for them when I think of this.

OOGNO
Alas for them! A miserly heart must be a sore affliction.

THAHN
A sore affliction indeed, and bad for our calling.

OOGNO (*reflectively*)
They have been thus for many months. What thing has befallen them?

THAHN
Some evil thing.

ULF
There has been a comet come near to the earth of late and the earth has been parched and sultry so that the gods are drowsy and all those things that are divine in man, such as benevolence, drunkenness, extravagance, and song, have faded and died and have not been replenished by the gods.

OOGNO
It has indeed been sultry.

THAHN
I have seen the comet o' nights.

ULF
The gods are drowsy.

OOGNO
If they awake not soon and make this city worthy again of our order I for one shall forsake the calling and buy a shop and sit at ease in the shade and barter for gain.

THAHN
You will keep a shop?
[*Enter Agmar and Slag. Agmar, though poorly dressed, is tall, imperious, and older than Ulf. Slag follows behind him.*

AGMAR
Is this a beggar who speaks?

OOGNO
Yes, master, a poor beggar.

AGMAR
How long has the calling of beggary existed?

OOGNO
Since the building of the first city, master.

AGMAR
And when has a beggar ever followed a trade? When has he ever haggled and bartered and sat in a shop?

OOGNO
Why, he has never done so.

AGMAR
Are you he that shall be first to forsake the calling?

OOGNO
Times are bad for the calling here.

THAHN
They are bad.

AGMAR
So you would forsake the calling?

OOGNO
The city is unworthy of our calling. The gods are drowsy and all that is divine in man is dead. (*To third beggar*) Are not the gods drowsy?

ULF
They are drowsy in their mountains away at Marma. The seven green idols are drowsy. Who is this that rebukes us?

THAHN
Are you some great merchant, master? Perhaps you will help a poor man that is starving.

SLAG
My master a merchant! No, no. He is no merchant. My master is no merchant.

OOGNO
I perceive that he is some lord in disguise. The gods have woken and have sent him to save us.

SLAG
No, no. You do not know my master. You do not know him.

THAHN
Is he the Soldan's self that has come to rebuke us?

AGMAR
I am a beggar, and an old beggar.

SLAG (*with great pride*)
There is none like my master. No traveller has met with cunning like to his, not even those that come from Æthiopia.

ULF
We make you welcome to our town, upon which an evil has fallen, the days being bad for beggary.

AGMAR
Let none who has known the mystery of roads or has felt the wind arising new in the morning, or who has called forth out of the souls of men divine benevolence, ever speak any more of any trade or of the miserable gains of shops and the trading men.

OOGNO
I but spoke hastily, the times being bad.

AGMAR
I will put right the times.

SLAG
There is nothing that my master cannot do.

AGMAR (*to Slag*)
Be silent and attend to me. I do not know this city. I have travelled from far, having somewhat exhausted the city of Ackara.

SLAG
My master was three times knocked down and injured by carriages there, once he was killed and seven times beaten and robbed, and every time he was generously compensated. He had nine diseases, many of them mortal —

AGMAR
Be silent, Slag. — Have you any thieves among the calling here?

ULF
We have a few that we call thieves here, master, but they would scarcely seem thieves to you. They are not good thieves.

AGMAR
I shall need the best thief you have.

[*Enter two citizens richly clad, Illanaun and Oorander.*

ILLANAUN
Therefore we will send galleons to Ardaspes.

OORANDER
Right to Ardaspes through the silver gates.
[*Agmar transfers the thick handle of his long staff to his left armpit, he droops on to it and it supports his weight; he is upright no longer. His right arm hangs limp and useless. He hobbles up to the citizens imploring alms.*

ILLANAUN
I am sorry. I cannot help you. There have been too many beggars here and we must decline alms for the good of the town.

AGMAR (*sitting down and weeping*)
I have come from far.
[*Illanaun presently returns and gives Agmar a coin. Exit Illanaun. Agmar, erect again, walks back to the others.*

AGMAR
We shall need fine raiment; let the thief start at once. Let it rather be green raiment.

BEGGAR
I will go and fetch the thief. (*Exit*)

ULF
We will dress ourselves as lords and impose upon the city.

OOGNO
Yes, yes; we will say we are ambassadors from a far land.

ULF
And there will be good eating.

SLAG (*in an undertone to Ulf*)
But you do not know my master. Now that you have suggested that we shall

go as lords, he will make a better suggestion. He will suggest that we should go as kings.

ULF
Beggars as kings!

SLAG
Ay. You do not know my master.

ULF (*to Agmar*)
What do you bid us do?

AGMAR
You shall first come by the fine raiment in the manner I have mentioned.

ULF
And what then, master?

AGMAR
Why, then we shall go as gods.

BEGGARS
As gods!

AGMAR
As gods. Know you the land through which I have lately come in my wanderings? Marma, where the gods are carved from green stone in the mountains. They sit all seven of them against the hills. They sit there motionless and travellers worship them.

ULF
Yes, yes, we know those gods. They are much reverenced here, but they are drowsy and send us nothing beautiful.

AGMAR
They are of green jade. They sit cross-legged with their right elbows resting on their left hands, the right forefinger pointing upward. We will come into the city disguised, from the direction of Marma, and will claim to be these

gods. We must be seven as they are. And when we sit we must sit cross-legged as they do, with the right hand uplifted.

ULF
This is a bad city in which to fall into the hands of oppressors, for the judges lack amiability here as the merchants lack benevolence, ever since the gods forgot them.

AGMAR
In our ancient calling a man may sit at one street corner for fifty years doing the one thing, and yet a day may come when it is well for him to rise up and do another thing while the timorous man starves.

ULF
Also it were well not to anger the gods.

AGMAR
Is not all life a beggary to the gods? Do they not see all men always begging of them and asking alms with incense, and bells, and subtle devices?

OOGNO
Yes, all men indeed are beggars before the gods.

AGMAR
Does not the mighty Soldan often sit by the agate altar in his royal temple as we sit at a street corner or by a palace gate?

ULF
It is even so.

AGMAR
Then will the gods be glad when we follow the holy calling with new devices and with subtlety, as they are glad when the priests sing a new song.

ULF
Yet I have a fear.
[*Enter two men talking.*

AGMAR (*to Slag*)
Go you into the city before us and let there be a prophecy there which saith that the gods who are carven from green rock in the mountain shall one day arise in Marma and come here in the guise of men.

SLAG
Yes, master. Shall I make the prophecy myself? Or shall it be found in some old document?

AGMAR
Let someone have seen it once in some rare document. Let it be spoken of in the market place.

SLAG
It shall be spoken of, master.
[*Slag lingers. Enter Thief and Thahn.*

OOGNO
This is our thief.

AGMAR (*encouragingly*)
Ah, he is a quick thief.

THIEF
I could only procure you three green raiments, master. The city is not now well supplied with them; moreover, it is a very suspicious city and without shame for the baseness of its suspicions.

SLAG (*to a beggar*)
This is not thieving.

THIEF
I could do no more, master. I have not practised thieving all my life.

AGMAR
You have got something: it may serve our purpose. How long have you been thieving?

THIEF
I stole first when I was ten.

SLAG (*in horror*)
When he was ten!

AGMAR
We must tear them up and divide them amongst the seven. (*To Thahn*) Bring me another beggar.

SLAG
When my master was ten he had already to slip by night out of two cities.

OOGNO (*admiringly*)
Out of two cities?

SLAG (*nodding his head*)
In his native city they do not now know what became of the golden cup that stood in the Lunar Temple.

AGMAR
Yes, into seven pieces.

ULF
We will each wear a piece of it over our rags.

OOGNO
Yes, yes, we shall look fine.

AGMAR
That is not the way that we shall disguise ourselves.

OOGNO
Not cover our rags?

AGMAR
No, no. The first who looked closely would say, “These are only beggars. They have disguised themselves.”

ULF
What shall we do?

AGMAR
Each of the seven shall wear a piece of the green raiment underneath his rags. And peradventure here and there a little shall show through; and men shall say, “These seven have disguised themselves as beggars. But we know not what they be.”

SLAG
Hear my wise master.

OOGNO (*in admiration*)
He is a beggar.

ULF
He is an *old* beggar.

CURTAIN

THE SECOND ACT

The Metropolitan Hall of the city of Kongros. Citizens, etc.
Enter the seven beggars with green silk under their rags.

OORANDER
Who are you and whence come you?

AGMAR
Who may say what we are or whence we come?

OORANDER
What are these beggars and why do they come here?

AGMAR
Who said to you that we were beggars?

OORANDER
Why do these men come here?

AGMAR
Who said to you that we were men?

ILLANAUN
Now, by the moon!

AGMAR
My sister.

ILLANAUN
What?

AGMAR
My little sister.

SLAG
Our little sister the moon. She comes to us at evenings away in the mountains of Marma. She trips over the mountains when she is young.

When she is young and slender she comes and dances before us, and when she is old and unshapely she hobbles away from the hills.

AGMAR
Yet is she young again and forever nimble with youth; yet she comes dancing back. The years are not able to curb her nor to bring gray hairs to her brethren.

OORANDER
This is not wonted.

ILLANAUN
It is not in accordance with custom.

AKMOS
Prophecy hath not thought it.

SLAG
She comes to us new and nimble, remembering olden loves.

OORANDER
It were well that prophets should come and speak to us.

ILLANAUN
This hath not been in the past. Let prophets come. Let prophets speak to us of future things.
[*The beggars seat themselves upon the floor in the attitude of the seven gods of Marma.*

CITIZEN
I heard men speak to-day in the market place. They speak of a prophecy read somewhere of old. It says the seven gods shall come from Marma in the guise of men.

ILLANAUN
Is this a true prophecy?

OORANDER
It is all the prophecy we have. Man without prophecy is like a sailor going by night over uncharted seas. He knows not where are the rocks nor where the havens. To the man on watch all things ahead are black and the stars guide him not, for he knows not what they are.

ILLANAUN
Should we not investigate this prophecy?

OORANDER
Let us accept it. It is as the small, uncertain light of a lantern, carried it may be by a drunkard, but along the shore of some haven. Let us be guided.

AKMOS
It may be that they are but benevolent gods.

AGMAR
There is no benevolence greater than our benevolence.

ILLANAUN
Then we need do little: they portend no danger to us.

AGMAR
There is no anger greater than our anger.

OORANDER
Let us make sacrifice to them if they be gods.

AKMOS
We humbly worship you, if ye be gods.

ILLANAUN (*kneeling too*)
You are mightier than all men and hold high rank among other gods and are lords of this our city, and have the thunder as your plaything and the whirlwind and the eclipse and all the destinies of human tribes — if ye be gods.

AGMAR
Let the pestilence not fall at once upon this city, as it had indeed designed to; let not the earthquake swallow it all immediately up amid the howls of the thunder; let not infuriated armies overwhelm those that escape — if we be gods —

POPULACE (*in horror*)
If we be gods!

OORANDER
Come, let us sacrifice.

ILLANAUN
Bring lambs.

AKMOS
Quick! Quick! (*Exeunt some*)

SLAG (*with solemn air*)
This god is a very divine god.

THAHN
He is no common god.

MLAN
Indeed he has made us.

CITIZEN (*to Slag*)
He will not punish us, master? None of the gods will punish us? We will make a sacrifice, a good sacrifice.

ANOTHER
We will sacrifice a lamb that the priests have blessed.

FIRST CITIZEN
Master, you are not wroth with us?

SLAG
Who may say what cloudy dooms are rolling up in the mind of the eldest of the gods? He is no common god like us. Once a shepherd went by him in the mountains and doubted as he went. He sent a doom after that shepherd.

CITIZEN
Master, we have not doubted.

SLAG
And the doom found him on the hills at evening.

SECOND CITIZEN
It shall be a good sacrifice, master.
[*Reënter with a dead lamb and fruits. They offer the lamb on an altar where there is fire, and fruits before the altar.*

THAHN (*stretching out a hand to a lamb upon an altar*)
That leg is not being cooked at all.

ILLANAUN
It is strange that gods should be thus anxious about the cooking of a leg of lamb.

OORANDER
It is strange certainly.

ILLANAUN
Almost I had said that it was a man spoke then.

OORANDER (*stroking his beard and regarding the second beggar*)
Strange. Strange, certainly.

AGMAR
Is it then strange that the gods love roasted flesh? For this purpose they keep the lightning. When the lightning flickers about the limbs of men there comes to the gods in Marma a pleasant smell, even a smell of roasting. Sometimes the gods, being pacific, are pleased to have roasted instead the flesh of lamb. It is all one to the gods; let the roasting stop.

OORANDER
No, no, gods of the mountains!

OTHERS
No, no.

OORANDER
Quick, let us offer the flesh to them. If they eat, all is well.
[*They offer it; the beggars eat, all but Agmar, who watches.*

ILLANAUN
One who was ignorant, one who did not know, had almost said that they ate like hungry men.

OTHERS
Hush!

AKMOS
Yet they look as though they had not had a meal like this for a long time.

OORANDER
They have a hungry look.

AGMAR (*who has not eaten*)
I have not eaten since the world was very new and the flesh of men was tenderer than now. These younger gods have learned the habit of eating from the lions.

OORANDER
O oldest of divinities, partake, partake.

AGMAR
It is not fitting that such as I should eat. None eat but beasts and men and the younger gods. The sun and the moon and the nimble lightning and I — we may kill and we may madden, but we do not eat.

AKMOS
If he but eat of our offering he cannot overwhelm us.

ALL

Oh, ancient deity, partake, partake.

AGMAR
Enough. Let it be enough that these have condescended to this bestial and human habit.

ILLANAUN (*to Akmos*)
And yet he is not unlike a beggar whom I saw no so long since.

OORANDER
But beggars eat.

ILLANAUN
Now I never knew a beggar yet who would refuse a bowl of Woldery wine.

AKMOS
This is no beggar.

ILLANAUN
Nevertheless let us offer him a bowl of Woldery wine.

AKMOS
You do wrong to doubt him.

ILLANAUN
I do but wish to prove his divinity. I will fetch the Woldery wine. (*Exit*)

AKMOS
He will not drink. Yet if he does, then he will not overwhelm us. Let us offer him the wine.
[*Reënter Illanaun with a goblet.*

FIRST BEGGAR
It is Woldery wine!

SECOND BEGGAR
It is Woldery!

THIRD BEGGAR
A goblet of Woldery wine!

FOURTH BEGGAR
O blessed day!

MLAN
O happy times!

SLAG
O my wise master!
[*Illanaun takes the goblet. All the beggars stretch out their hands including Agmar. Illanaun gives it to Agmar. Agmar takes it solemnly, and very carefully pours it upon the ground.*

FIRST BEGGAR
He has spilt it.

SECOND BEGGAR
He has spilt it. (*Agmar sniffs the fumes, loquitur*)

AGMAR
It is a fitting libation. Our anger is somewhat appeased.

ANOTHER BEGGAR
But it was Woldery!

AKMOS (*kneeling to Agmar*)
Master, I am childless, and I —

AGMAR
Trouble us not now. It is the hour at which the gods are accustomed to speak to the gods in the language of the gods, and if Man heard us he would guess the futility of his destiny, which were not well for Man. Begone! Begone!

ONE LINGERS (*loquitur*)
Master —

AGMAR
Begone!
[*Exeunt. Agmar takes up a piece of meat and begins to eat it; the beggars rise and stretch themselves: they laugh, but Agmar eats hungrily.*

OOGNO
Ah! Now we have come into our own.

THAHN
Now we have alms.

SLAG
Master! My wise master!

ULF
These are the good days, the good days; and yet I have a fear.

SLAG
What do you fear? There is nothing to fear. No man is as wise as my master.

ULF
I fear the gods whom we pretend to be.

SLAG
The gods?

AGMAR (*taking a chunk of meat from his lips*)
Come hither, Slag.

SLAG (*going up to him*)
Yes, master.

AGMAR
Watch in the doorway while I eat. (*Slag goes to the doorway*) Sit in the

attitude of a god. Warn me if any of the citizens approach.
[*Slag sits in the doorway in the attitude of a god, back to the audience.*

OOGNO (*to Agmar*)
But, master, shall we not have Woldery wine?

AGMAR
We shall have all things if only we are wise at first for a little.

THAHN
Master, do any suspect us?

AGMAR
We must be *very* wise.

THAHN
But if we are not wise, master?

AGMAR
Why, then death may come to us —

THAHN
O master!

AGMAR
— slowly.
[*All stir uneasily except Slag, who sits motionless in the doorway.*

OOGNO
Do they believe us, master?

SLAG (*half turning his head*)
Someone comes.
[*Slag resumes his position.*

AGMAR (*putting away his meat*)
We shall soon know now.
[*All take up the attitude. Enter One, loquitur.*

ONE
Master, I want the god that does not eat.

AGMAR
I am he.

ONE
Master, my child was bitten in the throat by a death-adder at noon. Spare him, master; he still breathes, but slowly.

AGMAR
Is he indeed your child?

ONE
He is surely my child, master.

AGMAR
Was it your wont to thwart him in his play, while he was strong and well?

ONE
I never thwarted him, master.

AGMAR
Whose child is Death?

ONE
Death is the child of the gods.

AGMAR
Do you that never thwarted your child in his play ask this of the gods?

ONE (*with some horror, perceiving Agmar's meaning*)
Master!

AGMAR
Weep not. For all the houses that men have builded are the play-fields of this child of the gods.
[*The Man goes away in silence, not weeping.*

OOGNO (*taking Thahn by the wrist*)
Is this indeed a man?

AGMAR
A man, a man, and until just now a hungry one.

CURTAIN

THE THIRD ACT

Same room.
A few days have elapsed.
Seven thrones shaped like mountain-crags stand along the back of the stage. On these the beggars are lounging. The Thief is absent.

MLAN
Never had beggars such a time.

OOGNO
Ah, the fruits and tender lamb!

THAHN
The Woldery wine!

SLAG
It was better to see my master's wise devices than to have fruit and lamb and Woldery wine.

MLAN
Ah! When they spied on him to see if he would eat when they went away!

OOGNO
When they questioned him concerning the gods and Man!

THAHN
When they asked him why the gods permitted cancer!

SLAG
Ah, my wise master!

MLAN
How well his scheme has succeeded!

OOGNO
How far away is hunger!

THAHN
It is even like to one of last year's dreams, the trouble of a brief night long ago.

OOGNO (*laughing*)
Ho, ho, ho! To see them pray to us.

AGMAR
When we were beggars did we not speak as beggars? Did we not whine as they? Was not our mien beggarly?

OOGNO
We were the pride of our calling.

AGMAR
Then now that we are gods, let us be as gods, and not mock our worshippers.

ULF
I think that the gods *do* mock their worshippers.

AGMAR
The gods have never mocked us. We are above all pinnacles that we have ever gazed at in dreams.

ULF
I think that when man is high then most of all are the gods wont to mock him.

THIEF (*entering*)
Master! I have been with those that know all and see all. I have been with the thieves, master. They know me for one of the craft, but they do not know me as being one of us.

AGMAR
Well, well!

THIEF
There is danger, master, there is great danger.

AGMAR
You mean that they suspect that we are men.

THIEF
That they have long done, master. I mean that they will know it. Then we are lost.

AGMAR
Then they do not know it.

THIEF
They do not know it yet, but they will know it, and we are lost.

AGMAR
When will they know it?

THIEF
Three days ago they suspected us.

AGMAR
More than you think suspected us, but have any dared to say so?

THIEF
No, master.

AGMAR
Then forget your fears, my thief.

THIEF
Two men went on dromedaries three days ago to see if the gods were still at Marma.

AGMAR
They went to Marma!

THIEF
Yes, three days ago.

OOGNO
We are lost!

AGMAR
They went three days ago?

THIEF
Yes, on dromedaries.

AGMAR
They should be back to-day.

OOGNO
We are lost!

THAHN
We are lost!

THIEF
They must have seen the green jade idols sitting against the mountains. They will say, “The gods are still at Marma.” And we shall be burnt.

SLAG
My master will yet devise a plan.

AGMAR (*to the Thief*)
Slip away to some high place and look toward the desert and see how long we have to devise a plan.

SLAG
My master will find a plan.

OOGNO
He has taken us into a trap.

THAHN
His wisdom is our doom.

SLAG
He will find a wise plan yet.

THIEF (*reëntering*)
It is too late!

AGMAR
It is too late!

THIEF
The dromedary men are here.

OOGNO
We are lost!

AGMAR
Be silent! I must think.
[*They all sit still. Citizens enter and prostrate themselves. Agmar sits deep in thought.*

ILLANAUN (*to Agmar*)
Two holy pilgrims have gone to your sacred shrines, wherein you were wont to sit before you left the mountains. (*Agmar says nothing*) They return even now.

AGMAR
They left us here and went to find the gods? A fish once took a journey into a far country to find the sea.

ILLANAUN
Most reverend deity, their piety is so great that they have gone to worship even your shrines.

AGMAR
I know these men that have great piety. Such men have often prayed to me

before, but their prayers are not acceptable. They little love the gods; their only care is their piety. I know these pious ones. They will say that the seven gods were still at Marma. They will lie and say that we were still at Marma. So shall they seem more pious to you all, pretending that they alone have seen the gods. Fools shall believe them and share in their damnation.

OORANDER (*to Illanaun*)
Hush! You anger the gods.

ILLANAUN
I am not sure whom I anger.

OORANDER
It may be they are the gods.

ILLANAUN
Where are these men from Marma?

CITIZEN
Here are the dromedary men; they are coming now.

ILLANAUN (*to Agmar*)
The holy pilgrims from your shrine are come to worship you.

AGMAR
The men are doubters. How the gods hate the word! Doubt ever contaminated virtue. Let them be cast into prison and not besmirch your purity. (*Rising*) Let them not enter here.

ILLANAUN
But oh, most reverend deity from the Mountain, we also doubt, most reverend deity.

AGMAR
You have chosen. You have chosen. And yet it is not too late. Repent and cast these men in prison and it may not be too late. *The gods have never wept.* And yet when they think upon damnation and the dooms that are withering a myriad bones, then almost, were they not divine, they could

weep. Be quick! Repent of your doubt.
[*Enter the Dromedary Men.*

ILLANAUN
Most reverend deity, it is a mighty doubt.

CITIZENS
Nothing has killed him! They are not the gods!

SLAG (*to Agmar*)
You have a plan, my master. You have a plan.

AGMAR
Not yet, Slag.

ILLANAUN (*to Oorander*)
These are the men that went to the shrines at Marma.

OORANDER (*in a loud, clear voice*)
Were the Gods of the Mountain seated still at Marma, or were they not there?
[*The beggars get up hurriedly from their thrones.*

DROMEDARY MAN
They were not there.

ILLANAUN
They were not there?

DROMEDARY MAN
Their shrines were empty.

OORANDER
Behold the Gods of the Mountain!

AKMOS
They have indeed come from Marma.

OORANDER
Come. Let us go away to prepare a sacrifice. A mighty sacrifice to atone for our doubting. (*Exeunt*)

SLAG
My most wise master!

AGMAR
No, no, Slag. I do not know what has befallen. When I went by Marma only two weeks ago the idols of green jade were still seated there.

OOGNO
We are saved now.

THAHN
Ay, we are saved.

AGMAR
We are saved, but I know not how.

OOGNO
Never had beggars such a time.

THIEF
I will go out and watch. (*He creeps out*)

ULF
Yet I have a fear.

OOGNO
A fear? Why, we are saved.

ULF
Last night I dreamed.

OOGNO
What was your dream?

ULF
It was nothing. I dreamed that I was thirsty and one gave me Woldery wine; yet there was a fear in my dream.

THAHN
When I drink Woldery wine I am afraid of nothing.

THIEF (*reëntering*)
They are making a pleasant banquet ready for us; they are killing lambs, and girls are there with fruits, and there is to be much Woldery wine.

MLAN
Never had beggars such a time.

AGMAR
Do any doubt us now?

THIEF
I do not know.

MLAN
When will the banquet be?

THIEF
When the stars come out.

OOGNO
Ah! It is sunset already. There will be good eating.

THAHN
We shall see the girls come in with baskets upon their heads.

OOGNO
There will be fruits in the baskets.

THAHN
All the fruits of the valley.

MLAN
Oh, how long we have wandered along the ways of the world!

SLAG
Oh, how hard they were!

THAHN
And how dusty!

OOGNO
And how little wine!

MLAN
How long we have asked and asked, and for how much!

AGMAR
We to whom all things are coming now at last!

THIEF
I fear lest my art forsake me now that good things come without stealing.

AGMAR
You will need your art no longer.

SLAG
The wisdom of my master shall suffice us all our days.
[*Enter a frightened Man. He kneels before Agmar and abates his forehead.*

MAN
Master, we implore you, the people beseech you.
[*Agmar and the beggars in the attitude of the gods sit silent.*

MAN
Master, it is terrible. (*The beggars maintain silence*) It is terrible when you wander in the evening. It is terrible on the edge of the desert in the evening. Children die when they see you.

AGMAR
In the desert? When did you see us?

MAN
Last night, master. You were terrible last night. You were terrible in the gloaming. When your hands were stretched out and groping. You were feeling for the city.

AGMAR
Last night do you say?

MAN
You were terrible in the gloaming!

AGMAR
You yourself saw us?

MAN
Yes, master, you were terrible. Children too saw you and they died.

AGMAR
You say you saw us?

MAN
Yes, master. Not as you are now, but otherwise. We implore you, master, not to wander at evening. You are terrible in the gloaming. You are —

AGMAR
You say we appeared not as we are now. How did we appear to you?

MAN
Otherwise, master, otherwise.

AGMAR
But how did we appear to you?

MAN
You were all green, master, all green in the gloaming, all of rock again as

you used to be in the mountains. Master, we can bear to see you in flesh like men, but when we see rock walking it is terrible, it is terrible.

AGMAR
That is how we appeared to you?

MAN
Yes, master. Rock should not walk. When children see it they do not understand. Rock should not walk in the evening.

AGMAR
There have been doubters of late. Are they satisfied?

MAN
Master, they are terrified. Spare us, master.

AGMAR
It is wrong to doubt. Go and be faithful.
[*Exit Man.*

SLAG
What have they seen, master?

AGMAR
They have seen their own fears dancing in the desert. They have seen something green after the light was gone, and some child has told them a tale that it was us. I do not know what they have seen. What should they have seen?

ULF
Something was coming this way from the desert, he said.

SLAG
What should come from the desert?

AGMAR
They are a foolish people.

ULF
That man's white face has seen some frightful thing.

SLAG
A frightful thing?

ULF
That man's face has been near to some frightful thing.

AGMAR
It is only we that have frightened them and their fears have made them foolish.
[*Enter an Attendant with a torch or lantern which he places in a receptacle. Exit.*

THAHN
Now we shall see the faces of the girls when they come to the banquet.

MLAN
Never had beggars such a time.

AGMAR
Hark! They are coming. I hear footsteps.

THAHN
The dancing girls! They are coming!

THIEF
There is no sound of flutes, they said they would come with music.

OOGNO
What heavy boots they have; they sound like feet of stone.

THAHN
I do not like to hear their heavy tread. Those that would dance to *us* must be light of foot.

AGMAR
I shall not smile at them if they are not airy.

MLAN
They are coming very slowly. They should come nimbly to us.

THAHN
They should dance as they come. But the footfall is like the footfall of heavy crabs.

ULF (*in a loud voice, almost chanting*)
I have a fear, an old fear and a boding. We have done ill in the sight of the seven gods. Beggars we were and beggars we should have remained. We have given up our calling and come in sight of our doom. I will no longer let my fear be silent; it shall run about and cry; it shall go from me crying, like a dog from out of a doomed city; for my fear has seen calamity and has known an evil thing.

SLAG (*hoarsely*)
Master!

AGMAR (*rising*)
Come, come!
[*They listen. No one speaks. The stony boots come on. Enter in single file through door in right of back, a procession of seven green men, even hands and faces are green; they wear greenstone sandals; they walk with knees extremely wide apart, as having sat cross-legged for centuries; their right arms and right forefingers point upward, right elbows resting on left hands; they stoop grotesquely. Halfway to the footlights they left wheel. They pass in front of the seven beggars, now in terrified attitudes, and six of them sit down in the attitude described, with their backs to the audience. The leader stands, still stooping.*

OOGNO (*cries out just as they wheel left*)
The Gods of the Mountain!

AGMAR (*hoarsely*)
Be still! They are dazzled by the light. They may not see us.
[*The leading Green Thing points his forefinger at the lantern — the flame turns green. When the six are seated the leader points one by one at each of the seven beggars, shooting out his forefinger at them. As he does this each beggar in his turn gathers himself back on to his throne and crosses his legs, his right arm goes stiffly upward with forefinger erect, and a staring look of horror comes into his eyes. In this attitude the beggars sit motionless while a green light falls upon their faces. The gods go out. Presently enter the Citizens, some with victuals and fruit. One touches a beggar's arm and then another's.*

CITIZEN
They are cold; they have turned to stone.
[*All abase themselves, foreheads to the floor.*

ONE
We have doubted them. We have doubted them. They have turned to stone because we have doubted them.

ANOTHER
They were the true gods.

ALL

They were the true gods.

CURTAIN

THE GOLDEN DOOM

PERSONS

The King
Chamberlain
Chief Prophet
Girl
Boy
Spies
First Prophet
Second Prophet
First Sentry
Second Sentry
Stranger
Attendants
Scene: Outside the King's great door in Zericon.
Time: Some while before the fall of Babylon.

THE GOLDEN DOOM
Two Sentries pace to and fro, then halt, one on each side of the great door.

FIRST SENTRY
The day is deadly sultry.

SECOND SENTRY
I would that I were swimming down the Gyshon, on the cool side, under the fruit trees.

FIRST SENTRY
It is like to thunder or the fall of a dynasty.

SECOND SENTRY
It will grow cool by night-fall. Where is the King?

FIRST SENTRY
He rows in his golden barge with ambassadors or whispers with captains concerning future wars. The stars spare him!

SECOND SENTRY
Why do you say “the stars spare him”?

FIRST SENTRY
Because if a doom from the stars fall suddenly on a king it swallows up his people and all things round about him, and his palace falls and the walls of his city and citadel, and the apes come in from the woods and the large beasts from the desert, so that you would not say that a king had been there at all.

SECOND SENTRY
But why should a doom from the stars fall on the King?

FIRST SENTRY
Because he seldom placates them.

SECOND SENTRY
Ah! I have heard that said of him.

FIRST SENTRY
Who are the stars that a man should scorn them? Should they that rule the thunder, the plague and the earthquake withhold these things save for much prayer? Always ambassadors are with the King, and his commanders, come in from distant lands, prefects of cities and makers of the laws, but never the priests of the stars.

SECOND SENTRY
Hark! Was that thunder?

FIRST SENTRY
Believe me, the stars are angry.
[*Enter a Stranger. He wanders toward the King’s door, gazing about him.*

SENTRIES (*lifting their spears at him*)
Go back! Go back!

STRANGER
Why?

FIRST SENTRY
It is death to touch the King's door.

STRANGER
I am a stranger from Thessaly.

FIRST SENTRY
It is death even for a stranger.

STRANGER
Your door is strangely sacred.

FIRST SENTRY
It is death to touch it.
[*The Stranger wanders off.*
[*Enter two children hand in hand.*

BOY (*to the Sentry*)
I want to see the King to pray for a hoop.
[*The Sentry smiles.*

BOY (*pushes the door; to girl*)
I cannot open it. (*To the Sentry*) Will it do as well if I pray to the King's door?

SENTRY
Yes, quite as well. (*Turns to talk to the other Sentry*) Is there anyone in sight?

SECOND SENTRY (*shading his eyes*)
Nothing but a dog, and he far out on the plain.

FIRST SENTRY
Then we can talk awhile and eat bash.

BOY
King's door, I want a little hoop.

[*The Sentries take a little bash between finger and thumb from pouches and put that wholly forgotten drug to their lips.*

GIRL (*pointing*)
My father is a taller soldier than that.

BOY
My father can write. He taught me.

GIRL
Ho! Writing frightens nobody. My father is a soldier.

BOY
I have a lump of gold. I found it in the stream that runs down to Gyshon.

GIRL
I have a poem. I found it in my own head.

BOY
Is it a long poem?

GIRL
No. But it would have been only there were no more rhymes for sky.

BOY
What is your poem?

GIRL
I saw a purple bird
Go up against the sky
And it went up and up
And round about did fly.

BOY
I saw it die.

GIRL
That doesn't scan.

BOY
Oh, that doesn’t matter.

GIRL
Do you like my poem?

BOY
Birds aren’t purple.

GIRL
My bird was.

BOY
Oh!

GIRL
Oh, you don’t like my poem!

BOY
Yes, I do.

GIRL
No, you don’t; you think it horrid.

BOY
No. I don’t.

GIRL
Yes, you do. Why didn’t you say you liked it? It is the only poem I ever made.

BOY
I do like it. I do like it.

GIRL
You don’t, you don’t!

BOY
Don’t be angry. I’ll write it on the door for you.

GIRL
You’ll write it?

BOY
Yes, I can write it. My father taught me. I’ll write it with my lump of gold. It makes a yellow mark on the iron door.

GIRL
Oh, do write it! I would like to see it written like real poetry.
[*The Boy begins to write. The Girl watches.*

FIRST SENTRY
You see, we’ll be fighting again soon.

SECOND SENTRY
Only a little war. We never have more than a little war with the hill-folk.

FIRST SENTRY
When a man goes to fight, the curtains of the gods wax thicker than ever before between his eyes and the future; he may go to a great or to a little war.

SECOND SENTRY
There can only be a little war with the hill-folk.

FIRST SENTRY
Yet sometimes the gods laugh.

SECOND SENTRY
At whom?

FIRST SENTRY
At kings.

SECOND SENTRY
Why have you grown uneasy about this war in the hills?

FIRST SENTRY
Because the King is powerful beyond any of his fathers, and has more fighting men, more horses, and wealth that could have ransomed his father and his grandfather and dowered their queens and daughters; and every year his miners bring him more from the opal-mines and from the turquoise-quarries. He has grown very mighty.

SECOND SENTRY
Then he will the more easily crush the hill-folk in a little war.

FIRST SENTRY
When kings grow very mighty the stars grow very jealous.

BOY
I've written your poem.

GIRL
Oh, have you really?

BOY
Yes, I'll read it to you. (*He reads*)
I saw a purple bird
Go up against the sky
And it went up and up
And round about did fly.
I saw it die.

GIRL
It doesn't scan.

BOY
That doesn't matter.
[*Enter furtively a Spy, who crosses stage and goes out. The Sentries cease to talk.*

GIRL
That man frightens me.

BOY
He is only one of the King's spies.

GIRL
But I don't like the King's spies. They frighten me.

BOY
Come on, then, we'll run away.

SENTRY (*noticing the children again*)
Go away, go away! The King is coming, he will eat you.
[*The Boy throws a stone at the Sentry and runs out. Enter another Spy, who crosses the stage. Enter third Spy, who notices the door. He examines it and utters an owl-like whistle. No. 2 comes back. They do not speak. Both whistle. No. 3 comes. All examine the door. Enter the King and his Chamberlain. The King wears a purple robe. The Sentries smartly transfer their spears to their left hands and return their right arms to their right sides. They then lower their spears until their points are within an inch of the ground, at the same time raising their right hands above their heads. They stand for some moments thus. Then they lower their right arms to their right sides, at the same time raising their spears. In the next motion they take their spears into their right hands and lower the butts to the floor, where they were before, the spears slanting forward a little. Both Sentries must move together precisely.*

FIRST SPY (*runs forward to the King and kneels, abasing his forehead to the floor*)
Something has written on the iron door.

CHAMBERLAIN
On the iron door!

KING
Some fool has done it. Who has been here since yesterday?

FIRST SENTRY (*shifts his hand a little higher on his spear, brings the spear to his side and closes his heels all in one motion; he then takes one pace backward with his right foot; then he kneels on his right knee; when he has done this he speaks, but not before*)
Nobody, Majesty, but a stranger from Thessaly.

KING
Did he touch the iron door?

FIRST SENTRY
No, Majesty; he tried to, but we drove him away.

KING
How near did he come?

FIRST SENTRY
Nearly to our spears, Majesty.

KING
What was his motive in seeking to touch the iron door?

FIRST SENTRY
I do not know, Majesty.

KING
Which way did he go?

FIRST SENTRY (*pointing left*)
That way, Majesty, an hour ago.
[*The King whispers with one of his Spies, who stoops and examines the ground and steals away. The Sentry rises.*

KING (*to his two remaining Spies*)
What does this writing say?

A SPY
We cannot read, Majesty.

KING
A good spy should know everything.

SECOND SPY
We watch, Majesty, and we search out, Majesty. We read shadows, and we read footprints, and whispers in secret places. But we do not read writing.

KING (*to the Chamberlain*)
See what it is.

CHAMBERLAIN (*goes up and reads*)
It is treason, Majesty.

KING
Read it.

CHAMBERLAIN
I saw a purple bird
Go up against the sky,
And it went up and up
And round about did fly.
I saw it die.

FIRST SENTRY (*aside*)
The stars have spoken.

KING (*to the Sentry*)
Has anyone been here but the stranger from Thessaly?

SENTRY (*kneeling as before*)
Nobody, Majesty.

KING
You saw nothing?

FIRST SENTRY
Nothing but a dog far out upon the plain and the children of the guard at play.

KING (*to the Second Sentry*)
And you?

SECOND SENTRY (*kneeling*)
Nothing, Majesty.

CHAMBERLAIN
That is strange.

KING
It is some secret warning.

CHAMBERLAIN
It is treason.

KING
It is from the stars.

CHAMBERLAIN
No, no, Majesty. Not from the stars, not from the stars. Some man has done it. Yet the thing should be interpreted. Shall I send for the prophets of the stars?
[*The King beckons to his Spies. They run up to him.*

KING
Find me some prophet of the stars. (*Exeunt Spies*) I fear that we may go no more, my chamberlain, along the winding ways of unequalled Zericon, nor play dahoori with the golden balls. I have thought more of my people than of the stars and more of Zericon than of windy Heaven.

CHAMBERLAIN
Believe me, Majesty, some idle man has written it and passed by. Your spies shall find him, and then his name will be soon forgotten.

KING
Yes, yes. Perhaps you are right, though the sentries saw no one. No doubt some beggar did it.

CHAMBERLAIN
Yes, Majesty, some beggar has surely done it. But look, here come two prophets of the stars. They shall tell us that this is idle.
[*Enter two Prophets and a Boy attending them. All bow deeply to the King. The two Spies steal in again and stand at back.*

KING
Some beggar has written a rhyme on the iron gate, and as the ways of rhyme are known to you I desired you, rather as poets than as prophets, to say whether there was any meaning in it.

CHAMBERLAIN
'Tis but an idle rhyme.

FIRST PROPHET (*bows again and goes up to door. He glances at the writing*)
Come hither, servant of those that serve the stars.
[*Attendant approaches.*

FIRST PROPHET
Bring hither our golden cloaks, for this may be a matter for rejoicing; and bring our green cloaks also, for this may tell of young new beautiful things with which the stars will one day gladden the King; and bring our black cloaks also, for it may be a doom. (*Exit the Boy; the Prophet goes up to the door and reads solemnly*) The stars have spoken.
[*Reënter Attendant with cloaks.*

KING
I tell you that some beggar has written this.

FIRST PROPHET
It is written in pure gold. (*He dons the black cloak over body and head*)

KING
What do the stars mean? What warning is it?

FIRST PROPHET
I cannot say.

KING (*to Second Prophet*)
Come you then and tell us what the warning is.

SECOND PROPHET (*goes up to the door and reads*)
The stars have spoken. (*He cloaks himself in black*)

KING
What is it? What does it mean?

SECOND PROPHET
We do not know, but it is from the stars.

CHAMBERLAIN
It is a harmless thing; there is no harm in it, Majesty. Why should not birds die?

KING
Why have the prophets covered themselves in black?

CHAMBERLAIN
They are a secret people and look for inner meanings. There is no harm in it.

KING
They have covered themselves in black.

CHAMBERLAIN
They have not spoken of any evil thing. They have not spoken of it.

KING
If the people see the prophets covered in black they will say that the stars are against me and believe that my luck has turned.

CHAMBERLAIN
The people must not know.

KING
Some prophet must interpret to us the doom. Let the chief prophet of the stars be sent for.

CHAMBERLAIN (*going toward left exit*)
Summon the chief prophet of the stars that look on Zericon.

VOICES OFF
The chief prophet of the stars. The chief prophet of the stars.

CHAMBERLAIN
I have summoned the chief prophet, Majesty.

KING
If he interpret this aright I will put a necklace of turquoises round his neck with opals from the mines.

CHAMBERLAIN
He will not fail. He is a very cunning interpreter.

KING
What if he covers himself with a huge black cloak and does not speak and goes muttering away, slowly with bended head, till our fear spreads to the sentries and they cry aloud?

CHAMBERLAIN
This is no doom from the stars, but some idle scribe hath written it in his insolence upon the iron door, wasting his hoard of gold.

KING
Not for myself I have a fear of doom, not for myself; but I inherited a rocky land, windy and ill-nurtured, and nursed it to prosperity by years of peace and spread its boundaries by years of war. I have brought up harvests out of barren acres and given good laws unto naughty towns, and my people are happy, and lo, the stars are angry!

CHAMBERLAIN
It is not the stars, it is not the stars, Majesty, for the prophets of the stars

have not interpreted it. Indeed, it was only some reveller wasting his gold. [*Meanwhile enter Chief Prophet of the stars that look on Zericon.*

KING
Chief Prophet of the Stars that look on Zericon, I would have you interpret the rhyme upon yonder door.

CHIEF PROPHET (*goes up to the door and reads*)
It is from the stars.

KING
Interpret it and you shall have great turquoises round your neck, with opals from the mines in the frozen mountains.

CHIEF PROPHET (*cloaks himself like the others in a great black cloak*)
Who should wear purple in the land but a King, or who go up against the sky but he who has troubled the stars by neglecting their ancient worship? Such a one has gone up and up increasing power and wealth, such a one has soared above the crowns of those that went before him, such a one the stars have doomed, the undying ones, the illustrious. [*A pause.*

KING
Who wrote it?

CHIEF PROPHET
It is pure gold. Some god has written it.

CHAMBERLAIN
Some god?

CHIEF PROPHET
Some god whose home is among the undying stars.

FIRST SENTRY (*aside to the Second Sentry*)
Last night I saw a star go flaming earthward.

KING
Is this a warning or is it a doom?

CHIEF PROPHET
The stars have spoken.

KING
It is, then, a doom?

CHIEF PROPHET
They speak not in jest.

KING
I have been a great King — Let it be said of me "The stars overthrew him, and they sent a god for his doom." For I have not met my equal among kings that man should overthrow me; and I have not oppressed my people that man should rise up against me.

CHIEF PROPHET
It is better to give worship to the stars than to do good to man. It is better to be humble before the gods than proud in the face of your enemy though he do evil.

KING
Let the stars hearken yet and I will sacrifice a child to them — I will sacrifice a girl child to the twinkling stars and a male child to the stars that blink not, the stars of the steadfast eyes. (*To his Spies*) Let a boy and girl be brought for sacrifice. (*Exit a Spy to the right looking at footprints*) Will you accept this sacrifice to the god that the stars have sent? They say that the gods love children.

CHIEF PROPHET
I may refuse no sacrifice to the stars nor to the gods whom they send. (*To the other Prophets*) Make ready the sacrificial knives.
[*The Prophets draw knives and sharpen them.*

KING
Is it fitting that the sacrifice take place by the iron door where the god from the stars has trod, or must it be in the temple?

CHIEF PROPHET
Let it be offered by the iron door. (*To the other Prophets*) Fetch hither the altar stone.
[*The owl-like whistle is heard off right. The Third Spy runs crouching toward it. Exit.*

KING
Will this sacrifice avail to avert the doom?

CHIEF PROPHET
Who knows?

KING
I fear that even yet the doom will fall.

CHIEF PROPHET
It were wise to sacrifice some greater thing.

KING
What more can a man offer?

CHIEF PROPHET
His pride.

KING
What pride?

CHIEF PROPHET
Your pride that went up against the sky and troubled the stars.

KING
How shall I sacrifice my pride to the stars?

CHIEF PROPHET
It is upon your pride that the doom will fall, and will take away your crown and will take away your kingdom.

KING
I will sacrifice my crown and reign uncrowned amongst you, so only I save my kingdom.

CHIEF PROPHET
If you sacrifice your crown which is your pride, and if the stars accept it, perhaps the god that they sent may avert the doom and you may still reign in your kingdom though humbled and uncrowned.

KING
Shall I burn my crown with spices and with incense or cast it into the sea?

CHIEF PROPHET
Let it be laid here by the iron door where the god came who wrote the golden doom. When he comes again by night to shrivel up the city or to pour an enemy in through the iron door, he will see your cast-off pride and perhaps accept it and take it away to the neglected stars.

KING (*to the Chamberlain*)
Go after my spies and say that I make no sacrifice. (*Exit the Chamberlain to the right; the King takes off his crown*) Good-bye, my brittle glory; kings have sought you; the stars have envied you. (*The stage grows darker*)

CHIEF PROPHET
Even now the sun has set who denies the stars, and the day is departed wherein no gods walk abroad. It is near the hour when spirits roam the earth and all things that go unseen, and the faces of the abiding stars will be soon revealed to the fields. Lay your crown there and let us come away.

KING *(lays his crown before the iron door; then to the Sentries*)
Go! And let no man come near the door all night.

THE SENTRIES (*kneeling*)
Yes, Majesty.
[*They remain kneeling until after the King has gone. King and the Chief Prophet walk away.*

CHIEF PROPHET
It was your pride. Let it be forgotten. May the stars accept it. (*Exeunt left*)
[*The Sentries rise.*

FIRST SENTRY
The stars have envied him!

SECOND SENTRY
It is an ancient crown. He wore it well.

FIRST SENTRY
May the stars accept it.

SECOND SENTRY
If they do not accept it what doom will overtake him?

FIRST SENTRY
It will suddenly be as though there were never any city of Zericon nor two sentries like you and me standing before the door.

SECOND SENTRY
Why! How do you know?

FIRST SENTRY
That is ever the way of the gods.

SECOND SENTRY
But it is unjust.

FIRST SENTRY
How should the gods know that?

SECOND SENTRY
Will it happen to-night?

FIRST SENTRY
Come! we must march away. (*Exeunt right*)
[*The stage grows increasingly darker. Reënter the Chamberlain from the*

right. He walks across the Stage and goes out to the left. Reënter Spies from the right. They cross the stage, which is now nearly dark.

BOY (*enters from the right, dressed in white, his hands out a little, crying*) King's door, King's door, I want my little hoop. (*He goes up to the King's door. When he sees the King's crown there, he utters a satisfied*) O-oh! (*He takes it up, puts it on the ground, and, beating it before him with the sceptre, goes out by the way that he entered*)
[*The great door opens; there is light within; a furtive Spy slips out and sees that the crown is gone. Another Spy slips out. Their crouching heads come close together.*

FIRST SPY (*hoarse whisper*)
The gods have come!
[*They run back through the door and the door is closed. It opens again and the King and the Chamberlain come through.*

KING
The stars are satisfied.

CURTAIN

KING ARGIMĒNĒS AND THE UNKNOWN WARRIOR

PERSONS

King Argimēnēs	}
Zarb, *a slave born of slaves*	}
An Old Slave	} *Slaves of King Darniak*
A Young Slave	}
Slaves	}

King Darniak
The King's Overseer
A Prophet
The Idol-Guard
The Servant of the King's Dog

Queen Atharlia	}
Queen Oxara	} *Queens of King Darniak*
Queen Cahafra	}
Queen Thragolind	}

Guards and Attendants

Time: A long time ago.

THE FIRST ACT

The dinner-hour on the slave-fields of King Darniak. King Argimenes is sitting upon the ground, bowed, ragged and dirty, gnawing a bone. He has uncouth hair and a dishevelled beard. A battered spade lies near him. Two or three slaves sit at back of stage eating raw cabbage-leaves. The tear-song, the chant of the low-born, rises at intervals, monotonous and mournful, coming from distant slave-fields.

KING ARGIMENES
This is a good bone; there is juice in this bone.

ZARB
I wish I were you, Argimenes.

KING ARGIMENES
I am not to be envied any longer. I have eaten up my bone.

ZARB
I wish I were you, because you have been a king. Because men have prostrated themselves before your feet. Because you have ridden a horse and worn a crown and have been called Majesty.

KING ARGIMENES
When I remember that I have been a king it is very terrible.

ZARB
But you are lucky to have such things in your memory as you have. I have nothing in my memory — Once I went for a year without being flogged, and I remember my cleverness in contriving it — I have nothing else to remember.

KING ARGIMENES
It is very terrible to have been a king.

ZARB
But we have nothing who have no good memories in the past. It is not easy

for us to hope for the future here.

KING ARGIMENES
Have you any god?

ZARB
We may not have a god because he might make us brave and we might kill our guards. He might make a miracle and give us swords.

KING ARGIMENES
Ah, you have no hope, then.

ZARB
I have a little hope. Hush, and I will tell you a secret — The King's great dog is ill and like to die. They will throw him to us. We shall have beautiful bones then.

KING ARGIMENES
Ah! Bones.

ZARB
Yes. That is what *I* hope for. And have *you* no other hope? Do you not hope that your nation will arise some day and rescue you and cast off the king and hang him up by his thumbs from the palace gateway?

KING ARGIMENES
No. I have no other hope, for my god was cast down in the temple and broken into three pieces on the day that they surprised us and took me sleeping. But will they throw him to us? Will so honorable a brute as the King's dog be thrown to us?

ZARB
When he is dead his honors are taken away. Even the King when he is dead is given to the worms. Then why should not his dog be thrown to us?

KING ARGIMENES
We are not worms!

ZARB
You do not understand, Argimenes. The worms are little and free, while we are big and enslaved. I did not say we were worms, but we are *like* worms, and if they have the King when he is dead, why then —

KING ARGIMENES
Tell me more of the King's dog. Are there big bones on him?

ZARB
Ay, he is a big dog — a high, big, black one.

KING ARGIMENES
You know him then?

ZARB
Oh yes, I know him. I know him well. I was beaten once because of him, twenty-five strokes from the treble whips, two men beating me.

KING ARGIMENES
How did they beat you because of the King's dog?

ZARB
They beat me because I spoke to him without making obeisance. He was coming dancing along over the slave-fields and I spoke to him. He was a friendly great dog, and I spoke to him and patted his head, and did not make obeisance.

KING ARGIMENES
And they saw you do it?

ZARB
Yes, the slave-guard saw me. They came and seized me at once and bound my arms. The great dog wanted me to speak to him again, but I was hurried away.

KING ARGIMENES
You should have made obeisance.

ZARB
The great dog seemed so friendly that I forgot he was the King's great dog.

KING ARGIMENES
But tell me more. Was he hurt or is it a sickness?

ZARB
They say that it is a sickness.

KING ARGIMENES
Ah, then he will grow thin if he does not die soon. If it had been a hurt! — but we should not complain. I complain more often than you do because I had not learned to submit while I was yet young.

ZARB
If your beautiful memories do not please you, you should hope more. I wish I had your memories. I should not trouble to hope then. It is very hard to hope.

KING ARGIMENES
There will be nothing more to hope for when we have eaten the King's dog.

ZARB
Why, you might find gold in the earth while you were digging. Then you might bribe the commander of the guard to lend you his sword; we would all follow you if you had a sword. Then we might take the King and bind him and lay him on the ground and fasten his tongue outside his mouth with thorns and put honey on it and sprinkle honey near. Then the gray ants would come from one of their big mounds. My father found gold once when he was digging.

KING ARGIMENES (*pointedly*)
Did your father free himself?

ZARB
No. Because the King's Overseer found him looking at the gold and killed him. But he would have freed himself if he could have bribed the guard.
[*A Prophet walks across the stage attended by two guards.*

SLAVES
He is going to the King. He is going to the King.

ZARB
He is going to the King.

KING ARGIMENES
Going to prophesy good things to the King. It is easy to prophesy good things to a king, and be rewarded when the good things come. What else should come to a king? A prophet! A prophet!
[*A deep bell tolls slowly. King Argimenes and Zarb pick up their spades at once, and the old slaves at the back of the stage go down on their knees immediately and grub in the soil with their hands. The white beard of the oldest trails in the dirt as he works. King Argimenes digs.*

KING ARGIMENES
What is the name of that song that we always sing? I like the song.

ZARB
It has no name. It is our song. There is no other song.

KING ARGIMENES
Once there were other songs. Has this no name?

ZARB
I think the soldiers have a name for it.

KING ARGIMENES
What do the soldiers call it?

ZARB
The soldiers call it the tear-song, the chant of the low-born.

KING ARGIMENES
It is a good song. I could sing no other now.
[*Zarb moves away digging.*

KING ARGIMENES (*to himself as his spade touches something in the earth*)
Metal! (*Feels with his spade again*) Gold perhaps! — It is of no use here. (*Uncovers earth leisurely. Suddenly he drops on his knees and works excitedly in the earth with his hands. Then very slowly, still kneeling, he lifts, lying flat on his hands, a long greenish sword, his eyes intent on it. About the level of his uplifted forehead he holds it, still flat on both hands, and addresses it thus*) O holy and blessed thing! (*Then he lowers it slowly till his hands rest on his knees, and looking all the while at the sword, loquitur*) Three years ago to-morrow King Darniak spat at me, having taken my kingdom from me. Three times in that year I was flogged, with twelve stripes, with seventeen stripes, and with twenty stripes. A year and eleven months ago, come Moon-day, the King's Overseer struck me in the face, and nine times in that year he called me dog. For one month two weeks and a day I was yoked with a bullock and pulled a rounded stone all day over the paths, except while we were fed. I was flogged twice that year — with eighteen stripes and with ten stripes. This year the roof of the slave-sty has fallen in and King Darniak will not repair it. Five weeks ago one of his Queens laughed at me as she came across the slave-fields. I was flogged again this year and with thirteen stripes, and twelve times they have called me dog. And these things they have done to a king, and a king of the House of Ithara.(*He listens attentively for a moment, then buries the sword again and pats the earth over it with his hands, then digs again*)
[*The old slaves do not see him: their faces are to the earth. Enter the King's Overseer carrying a whip. The slaves and King Argimenes kneel with their foreheads to the ground as he passes across the stage. Exit the King's Overseer.*

KING ARGIMENES (*kneeling, hands outspread downward*)
O warrior spirit, wherever thou wanderest, whoever be thy gods, whether they punish thee or whether they bless thee, O kingly spirit, that once laid here this sword, behold, I pray to thee, having no gods to pray to, for the god of my nation was broken in three by night. Mine arm is stiff with three years' slavery, and remembers not the sword. But guide thy sword till I have slain six men and armed the strongest slaves, and thou shalt have the sacrifice every year of a hundred goodly oxen. And I will build in Ithara a

temple to thy memory wherein all that enter in shall remember thee; so shalt thou be honored and envied among the dead, for the dead are very jealous of remembrance. Ay, though thou wert a robber that took men's lives unrighteously, yet shall rare spices smoulder in thy temple and little maidens sing and new-plucked flowers deck the solemn aisles; and priests shall go about it ringing bells that thy soul shall find repose. Oh, but it has a good blade, this old green sword; thou wouldst not like to see it miss its mark (if the dead see at all, as wise men teach), thou wouldst not like to see it go thirsting into the air; so huge a sword should find its marrowy bone. (*Extending his right hand upward*) Come into my right arm, O ancient spirit, O unknown warrior's soul! And if thou hast the ear of any gods, speak there against Illuriel, god of King Darniak. (*He rises and goes on digging*)

THE KING'S OVERSEER (*reëntering*)
So you have been praying.

KING ARGIMENES (*kneeling*)
No, master.

THE KING'S OVERSEER
The slave-guard saw you. (*Strikes him*) It is not lawful for a slave to pray.

KING ARGIMENES
I did but pray to Illuriel to make me a good slave, to teach me to dig well and to pull the rounded stone and to make me not to die when the food is scarce, but to be a good slave to my master the great King.

THE KING'S OVERSEER
Who art thou to pray to Illuriel? Dogs may not pray to an immortal god. (*Exit*)
[*Zarb comes back, digging.*

KING ARGIMENES (*digging*)
Zarb!

ZARB (*also digging*)
Do not look at me when you speak. The guards are watching us. Look at your digging.

KING ARGIMENES
How do the guards know we are speaking because we look at one another?

ZARB
You are very witless. Of course they know.

KING ARGIMENES
Zarb!

ZARB
What is it?

KING ARGIMENES
How many guards are there in sight?

ZARB
There are six of them over there. They are watching us.

KING ARGIMENES
Are there other guards in sight of these six guards?

ZARB
No.

KING ARGIMENES
How do you know?

ZARB
Because whenever their officer leaves them they sit upon the ground and play with dice.

KING ARGIMENES
How does that show that there are not another six in sight of them?

ZARB
How witless you are, Argimenes! Of course it shows there are not. Because, if there were, another officer would see them, and their thumbs would be cut off.

KING ARGIMENES
Ah! (*A pause*) Zarb! (*A pause*) Would the slaves follow me if I tried to kill the guards?

ZARB
No, Argimenes.

KING ARGIMENES
Why would they not follow me?

ZARB
Because you look like a slave. They will never follow a slave, because they are slaves themselves, and know how mean a creature is a slave. If you looked like a king they would follow you.

KING ARGIMENES
But I am a king. They know that I am a king.

ZARB
It is better to look like a king. It is looks that they would go by.

KING ARGIMENES
If I had a sword would they follow me? A beautiful huge sword of bronze.

ZARB
I wish I could think of things like that. It is because you were once a king that you can think of a sword of bronze. I tried to hope once that I should some day fight the guards, but I couldn't picture a sword, I couldn't imagine it; I could only picture whips.

KING ARGIMENES
Dig a little nearer, Zarb. (*They both edge closer*) I have found a very old sword in the earth. It is not a sword such as common soldiers wear. A king

must have worn it, and an angry king. It must have done fearful things; there are little dints in it. Perhaps there was a battle here long ago where all were slain, and perhaps that king died last and buried his sword, but the great birds swallowed him.

ZARB
You have been thinking too much of the King's dog, Argimenes, and that has made you hungry, and hunger has driven you mad.

KING ARGIMENES
I *have* found such a sword.[*A pause.*

ZARB
Why — then you will wear a purple cloak again, and sit on a great throne, and ride a prancing horse, and we shall call you Majesty.

KING ARGIMENES
I shall break a long fast first and drink much water, and sleep. But will the slaves follow me?

ZARB
You will *make* them follow you if you have a sword. Yet is Illuriel a very potent god. They say that none have prevailed against King Darniak's dynasty so long as Illuriel stood. Once an enemy cast Illuriel into the river and overthrew the dynasty, but a fisherman found him again and set him up, and the enemy was driven out and the dynasty returned.

KING ARGIMENES
If Illuriel could be cast down as my god was cast down perhaps King Darniak could be overcome as I was overcome in my sleep?

ZARB
If Illuriel were cast down all the people would utter a cry and flee away. It would be a fearful portent.

KING ARGIMENES
How many men are there in the armory at the palace?

ZARB
There are ten men in the palace armory when all the slave-guards are out.
[*They dig awhile in silence.*

ZARB
The officer of the slave-guard has gone away — They are playing with dice now. (*He throws down his spade and stretches his arms*) The man with the big beard has won again, he is very nimble with his thumbs — They are playing again, but it is getting dark, I cannot clearly see.
[*King Argimenes furtively uncovers the sword, he picks it up and grips it in his hand.*

ZARB
Majesty!
[*King Argimenes crouches and steals away towards the slave-guard.*

ZARB (*to the other slaves*)
Argimenes has found a terrible sword and has gone to slay the slave-guard. It is not a common sword, it is some king's sword.

AN OLD SLAVE
Argimenes will be dreadfully flogged. We shall hear him cry all night. His cries will frighten us, and we shall not sleep.

ZARB
No, no! The guards flog poor slaves, but Argimenes had an angry look. The guards will be afraid when they see him look so angry and see his terrible sword. It was a huge sword, and he looked very angry. He will bring us the swords of the slave-guard. We must prostrate ourselves before him and kiss his feet or he will be angry with us too.

OLD SLAVE
Will Argimenes give me a sword?

ZARB
He will have swords for six of us if he slays the slave-guard. Yes, he will give you a sword.

SLAVE
A sword! No, no, I must not; the King would kill me if he found that I had a sword.

SECOND SLAVE (*slowly, as one who develops an idea*)
If the King found that I had a sword, why, then it would be an evil day for the King.
[*They all look off left.*

ZARB
I think that they are playing at dice again.

FIRST SLAVE
I do not see Argimenes.

ZARB
No, because he was crouching as he walked. The slave-guard is on the sky-line.

SECOND SLAVE
What is that dark shadow behind the slave-guard?

ZARB
It is too still to be Argimenes.

SECOND SLAVE
Look! It moves.

ZARB
The evening is too dark, I cannot see.
[*They continue to gaze into the gathering darkness. They raise themselves on their knees and crane their necks. Nobody speaks. Then from their lips and from others farther off goes up a long, deep "Oh!" It is like the sound that goes up from the grandstand when a horse falls at a fence, or, in England, like the first exclamation of the crowd at a great cricket match when a man is caught in the slips.*

CURTAIN

THE SECOND ACT

The Throne Hall of King Darniak. The King is seated on his throne in the centre at the back of the stage; a little to his left, but standing out from the wall, a dark-green seated idol is set up. His Queens are seated about him on the ground, two on his right and two between him and the idol. All wear crowns. Beside the dark-green idol a soldier with a pike is kneeling upon one knee. The tear-song, the chant of the low-born, drifts faintly up from the slave-fields.

FIRST QUEEN
Do show us the new prophet, Majesty; it would be very interesting to see another prophet.

THE KING
Ah, yes.
[*He strikes upon a gong, and an Attendant enters, walks straight past the King and bows before the idol; he then walks back to the centre of the stage and bows before the King.*

THE KING
Bring the new prophet hither.
[*Exit Attendant. Enter the King's Overseer holding a roll of paper. He passes the King, bows to the idol, returns to the front of the King, kneels, and remains kneeling with bended head.*

THE KING (*speaking in the meanwhile to the Second Queen on his immediate right*)
We are making a beautiful arbor for you, O Atharlia, at an end of the great garden. There shall be iris-flowers that you love and all things that grow by streams. And the stream there shall be small and winding like one of those in your country. I shall bring a stream a new way from the mountains. (*Turning to Queen Oxara on his extreme right*) And for you, too, O Oxara, we shall make a pleasance. I shall have rocks brought from the quarries for you, and my idle slaves shall make a hill and plant it with mountain shrubs, and you can sit there in the winter thinking of the North. (*To the kneeling Overseer*) Ah, what is here?

THE KING'S OVERSEER
The plans of your royal garden, Majesty. The slaves have dug it for five years and rolled the paths.

THE KING (*takes the plans*)
Was there not a garden in Babylon?

THE KING'S OVERSEER
They say there was a garden there of some sort, Majesty.

THE KING
I will have a greater garden. Let the world know and wonder. (*Looks at the plans*)

THE KING'S OVERSEER
It shall know at once, Majesty.

THE KING (*pointing at the plan*)
I do not like that hill, it is too steep.

THE KING'S OVERSEER
No, Majesty.

THE KING
Remove it.

THE KING'S OVERSEER
Yes, Majesty.

THE KING
When will the garden be ready for the Queens to walk in?

THE KING'S OVERSEER
Work is slow, Majesty, at this season of the year because the green stuff is scarce and the slaves grow idle. They even become insolent and ask for bones.

QUEEN CAHAFRA (*to the King's Overseer*)
Then why are they not flogged? (*To Queen Thragolind*) It is so simple, they *only* have to flog them, but these people are so silly sometimes. I want to walk in the great garden, and then they tell me: "It is not ready, Majesty. It is not ready, Majesty," as though there were any reason why it should *not* be ready.

FOURTH QUEEN
Yes, they are a great trouble to us.
[*Meanwhile the King hands back the plans. Exit the King's Overseer. Reënter Attendant with the Prophet, who is dressed in a long dark brown cloak; his face is solemn; he has a long dark beard and long hair. Having bowed before the idol, he bows before the King and stands silent. The attendant, having bowed to both, stands by the doorway.*

THE KING (*meanwhile to Queen Atharlia*)
Perhaps we shall lure the ducks when the marshes are frozen to come and swim in your stream; it will be like your own country. (*To the Prophet*) Prophesy unto us.

THE PROPHET (*speaks at once in a loud voice*)
There was once a King that had slaves to hate him and to toil for him, and he had soldiers to guard him and to die for him. And the number of the slaves that he had to hate him and to toil for him was greater than the number of the soldiers that he had to guard him and to die for him. And the days of that King were few. And the number of thy slaves, O King, that thou hast to hate thee is greater than the number of thy soldiers.

QUEEN CAHAFRA (*to Queen Thragolind*)
— and I wore the crown with the sapphires and the big emerald in it, and the foreign prince said that I looked very sweet.
[*The King, who has been smiling at Atharlia, gives a gracious nod to the Prophet when he hears him stop speaking. When the Queens see the King nod graciously, they applaud the Prophet by idly clapping their hands.*

THIRD QUEEN
Do ask him to make us another prophecy, Majesty! He is so interesting. He

looks so clever.

THE KING
Prophesy unto us.

THE PROPHET
Thine armies camped upon thy mountainous borders descry no enemy in the plains afar. And within thy gates lurks he for whom thy sentinels seek upon lonely guarded frontiers. There is a fear upon me and a boding. Even yet there is time, even yet; but *little* time. And my mind is dark with trouble for thy kingdom.

QUEEN CAHAFRA (*to Queen Thragolind*)
I do not like the way he does his hair.

QUEEN THRAGOLIND
It would be all right if he would only have it cut.

THE KING (*to the Prophet, dismissing him with a nod of the head*)
Thank you, that has been very interesting.

QUEEN THRAGOLIND
How clever he is! I wonder how he thinks of things like that?

QUEEN CAHAFRA
Yes, but I hate a man who is conceited about it. Look how he wears his hair.

QUEEN THRAGOLIND
Yes, of course, it is perfectly dreadful.

QUEEN CAHAFRA
Why can't he wear his hair like other people, even if he does say clever things?

QUEEN THRAGOLIND
Yes, I hate a conceited man.
[*Enter an Attendant. He bows before the idol, then kneels to the King.*

THE ATTENDANT
The guests are all assembled in the Chamber of Banquets.
[*All rise. The Queens walk two abreast to the Chamber of Banquets.*

QUEEN ATHARLIA (*to Queen Oxara*)
What was he talking about?

QUEEN OXARA
He was talking about the armies on the frontier.

QUEEN ATHARLIA
Ah! That reminds me of that young captain in the Purple Guard. They say that he loves Linoora.

QUEEN OXARA
Oh, Thearkos! Linoora probably said that.
[*When the Queens come to the doorway they halt on each side of it. Then they turn facing one another. Then the King leaves his throne and passes between them into the Chamber of Banquets, each couple courtseying low to him as he passes. The Queens follow, then the attendants. There rises the wine-song, the chant of the nobles, drowning the chant of the low-born. Only the Idol-Guard remains behind, still kneeling beside Illuriel.*

THE IDOL-GUARD
I do not like those things the Prophet said — It would be terrible if they were true — It would be very terrible if they were false, for he prophesies in the name of Illuriel — Ah! They are singing the wine-song, the chant of the nobles. The Queens are singing. How merry they are! — I should like to be a noble and sit and look at the Queens. (*He joins in the song*)

THE VOICE OF A SENTINEL
Guard, turn out. (*The wine-song still continues*)

THE VOICE OF ONE HAVING AUTHORITY
Turn out the guard there! Wake up, you accursed pigs!
[*Still the wine-song. A faint sound as of swords.*

A VOICE CRYING
To the armory! To the armory! Reinforce! The Slaves have come to the armory. Ah! mercy! (*For awhile there is silence*)

KING ARGIMENES (*in the doorway*)
Go you to the slave-fields. Say that the palace-guard is dead and that we have taken the armory. Ten of you, hold the armory till our men come from the slave-fields. (*He comes into the hall with his slaves armed with swords*) Throw down Illuriel.

THE IDOL-GUARD
You must take my life before you touch my god.

A SLAVE
We only want your pike.
[*All attack him; they seize his sword and bind his hands behind him. They all pull down Illuriel, the dark-green idol, who breaks into seven pieces.*

KING ARGIMENES
Illuriel is fallen and broken asunder.

ZARB (*with some awe*)
Immortal Illuriel is dead at last.

KING ARGIMENES
My god was broken into three pieces, but Illuriel is broken into seven. The fortunes of Darniak will prevail over mine no longer. (*A slave breaks off a golden arm from the throne*) Come, we will arm all the slaves. (*Exeunt*)

KING DARNIAK (*enters with Retinue*)
My throne is broken. Illuriel is turned against me.

AN ATTENDANT
Illuriel is fallen.

ALL (*with King Darniak*)
Illuriel is fallen, is fallen. (*Some drop their spears*)

KING DARNIAK (*to the Idol-Guard*)
What envious god or sacrilegious man has dared to do this thing?

THE IDOL-GUARD
Illuriel is fallen.

KING DARNIAK
Have men been here?

THE IDOL-GUARD
Is fallen.

KING DARNIAK
What way did they go?

THE IDOL-GUARD
Illuriel is fallen.

KING DARNIAK
They shall be tortured here before Illuriel, and their eyes shall be hung on a thread about his neck, so that Illuriel shall see it, and on their bones we will set him up again. Come!
[*Those that have dropped their spears pick them up, but trail them along behind them on the ground. All follow dejectedly.*

VOICES OF LAMENTATION (*growing fainter and fainter off*)
Illuriel is fallen, Illuriel is fallen. Illuriel, Illuriel, Illuriel. Is fallen. Is fallen. (*The song of the low-born ceases suddenly. Then voices of the slaves in the slave-fields chanting very loudly*) Illuriel is fallen, is fallen, is fallen. Illuriel is fallen and broken asunder. Illuriel is fallen, fallen, fallen.
[*Clamor of fighting is heard, the clash of swords, and voices, and now and then the name of Illuriel.*

THE IDOL-GUARD (*kneeling over a fragment of Illuriel*)
Illuriel is broken. They have overthrown Illuriel. They have done great harm to the courses of the stars. The moon will be turned to blackness or fall and forsake the nights. The sun will rise no more. They do not know

how they have wrecked the world.
[*Reënter King Argimenes and his men.*

KING ARGIMENES (*in the doorway*)
Go you to the land of Ithara and tell them that I am free. And do you go to the army on the frontier. Offer them death, or the right arm of the throne to be melted and divided amongst them all. Let them choose. (*The armed slaves go to the throne and stand on each side of it, loquitur*) Majesty, ascend your throne. (*King Argimenes, standing with his face toward the audience, lifts the sword slowly, lying on both his hands, a little above his head, then looking up at it, loquitur*) Praise to the unknown warrior and to all gods that bless him. (*He ascends the throne. Zarb prostrates himself at the foot of it and remains prostrated for the rest of the Act, muttering at intervals "Majesty." An armed slave enters dragging the King's Overseer. King Argimenes sternly watches him. He is dragged before the Throne. He still has the roll of parchment in his hand. For some moments King Argimenes does not speak. Then pointing at the parchment*) What have you there?

THE KING'S OVERSEER (*kneeling*)
It is a plan of the great garden, Majesty. It was to have been a wonder to the world. (*Unfolds it*)

KING ARGIMENES (*grimly*)
Show me the place that I digged for three years. (*The King's Overseer shows it with trembling hands; the parchment shakes visibly*) Let there be built there a temple to an Unknown Warrior. And let this sword be laid on its altar evermore, that the ghost of that Warrior wandering by night (if men do walk by night from across the grave) may see his sword again. And let slaves be allowed to pray there and those that are oppressed; nevertheless the noble and the mighty shall not fail to repair there too, that the Unknown Warrior shall not lack due reverence.
[*Enter, running, a Man of the household of King Darniak. He starts and stares aghast on seeing King Argimenes.*

KING ARGIMENES
Who are you?

MAN
I am the servant of the King's dog.

KING ARGIMENES
Why do you come here?

MAN
The King's dog is dead.

KING ARGIMENES AND HIS MEN (*savagely and hungrily*)
Bones!

KING ARGIMENES (*remembering suddenly what has happened and where he is*)
Let him be buried with the late King.

ZARB (*in a voice of protest*)
Majesty!

CURTAIN

It is not necessary for the prophet's hair to be at all unusual.

THE GLITTERING GATE

PERSONS

Jim, *lately a burglar* }
Bill, *lately a burglar* } *Both dead*

Scene: A Lonely Place.
Time: The present.

THE GLITTERING GATE

The Lonely Place is strewn with large black rocks and uncorked beer-bottles, the latter in great profusion. At back is a wall of granite built of great slabs, and in it the Gate of Heaven. The door is of gold.
Below the Lonely Place is an abyss hung with stars.
The rising curtain reveals Jim wearily uncorking a beer-bottle. Then he tilts it slowly and with infinite care. It proves to be empty. Faint and unpleasant laughter is heard off. This action and the accompanying far laughter are repeated continually throughout the play. Corked bottles are discovered lying behind rocks, and more descend constantly through the air, within reach of Jim. All prove to be empty.
Jim uncorks a few bottles.

JIM (*weighing one carefully*)
That's a full one. (*It is empty, like all*)
[*Singing is heard off left.*

BILL (*enters from left with a bullet-hole over his eye, singing*)
Rule Britannia, Britannia rule the waves. (*Breaking off his song*) Why, 'ullo. 'Ere's a bottle of beer. (*Finds it empty; looking off and downward*) I'm getting a bit tired of those blooming great stars down there and this rocky ledge. I've been walking along under this wall ever since. Why, it must be twenty-four hours since that house-holder shot me. And he needn't have done it, either, *I* wasn't going to hurt the bloke. I only wanted a bit of his silver stuff. It felt funny, that did. Hullo, a gate. Why, that's the Gate of Heaven. Well, well. So that's all right. (*Looks up and up for some time*) No. I can't climb *that* wall. Why, it's got no top to it. Up and up it goes. (*Knocks at the door and waits*)

JIM
That isn't for the likes of us.

BILL

Why, hullo, there's another bloke. Why, somebody's been hanging him. Why, if it isn't old Jim! Jim!

JIM (*wearily*)
Hullo.

BILL

Why, Jim! ‘Ow long ‘ave you been ’ere?

JIM
I *am* ’ere always.

BILL

Why, Jim, don’t you remember me? Why, you taught Bill to pick locks years and years ago when he was a little boy, and had never learnt a trade and hadn’t a penny in the world, and never would have had but for you, Jim. (*Jim stares vaguely*) I never forgot *you*, Jim. I broke into scores of houses. And then I took on big houses. Out in the country, you know, real big ones. I got rich, Jim, and respected by all who knew me. I was a citizen, Jim, one who dwelt in our midst. And of an evening, sitting over the fire, I used to say, “I am as clever as Jim.” But I wasn’t, Jim. I couldn’t climb like you. And I couldn’t walk like you on a creaky stair, when everything’s quite still and there’s a dog in the house and little rattly things left lying about, and a door that whines if you touch it, and someone ill upstairs that you didn’t know of, who has nothing to do but to listen for *you* ‘cause she can’t get to sleep. Don’t you remember little Bill?

JIM
That would be somewhere else.

BILL

Yes, Jim, yes. Down on Earth.

JIM
But there isn’t anywhere else.

BILL

I never forgot *you*, Jim. I'd be pattering away with my tongue, in Church, like all the rest, but all the time I'd be thinking of you in that little room at Putney and the man searching every corner of it for you with a revolver in one hand and a candle in the other, and you almost going round with him.

JIM
What is Putney?

BILL

Oh, Jim, can't you remember? Can't you remember the day you taught me a livelihood? I wasn't more than twelve, and it was spring, and all the may was in blossom outside the town. And we cleared out No. 25 in the new street. And next day we saw the man's fat, silly face. It was thirty years ago.

JIM
What are years?

BILL

Oh, *Jim*!

JIM
You see there isn't any hope here. And when there isn't any hope there isn't any future. And when there isn't any future there isn't any past. It's just the present here. I tell you we're stuck. There aren't no years here. Nor no nothing.

BILL

Cheer up, Jim. You're thinking of a quotation, "Abandon hope, all ye that enter here." I used to learn quotations; they are awfully genteel. A fellow called Shakespeare used to make them. But there isn't any sense in them. What's the use of saying *ye* when you mean *you*? Don't be thinking of quotations, Jim.

JIM
I tell you there is no hope here.

BILL

Cheer up, Jim. There's plenty of hope there, isn't there? (*Points to the Gate of Heaven*)

JIM
Yes, and that's why they keep it locked up so. They won't let us have any. No. I begin to remember Earth again now since you've been speaking. It was just the same there. The more they'd got the more they wanted to keep *you* from having a bit.

BILL

You'll cheer up a bit when I tell you what I've got. I say, Jim, have you got some beer? Why, so you have. Why, *you* ought to cheer up, Jim.

JIM
All the beer you're ever likely to see again. They're empty.

BILL (*half rising from the rock on which he has seated himself, and pointing his finger at Jim as he rises; very cheerfully*)
Why, you're the chap that said there was no hope here, and you're hoping to find beer in every bottle you open.

JIM
Yes; I *hope* to see a drop of beer in one some day, but I *know* I won't. Their trick *might* not work just once.

BILL

How many have you tried, Jim?

JIM
Oh, I don't know. I've always been at it, working as fast as I can, ever since — ever since — (*Feels his neck meditatively and up toward his ear*) Why, ever since, Bill.

BILL

Why don’t you stop it?

JIM
I’m too thirsty, Bill.

BILL

What do you think *I’ve got*, Jim?

JIM
I don’t know. Nothing’s any use.

BILL (*as yet another bottle is shown to be empty*)
Who’s that laughing, Jim?

JIM (*astonished at such a question, loudly and emphatically*)
Who’s that laughing?

BILL (*looks a little disconcerted at having apparently asked a silly question*)
Is it a pal?

JIM
A pal! — (*laughs*) (*The laugh off joins in loudly and for long*)

BILL

Well, I don’t know. But, Jim, what do you think I’ve got?

JIM
It isn’t any good to you whatever it is. Not even if it is a ten-pound note.

BILL

It’s better than a ten-pound note, Jim. Jim, try and remember, Jim. Don’t you remember the way we used to go for those iron safes? Do you remember anything, Jim?

JIM
Yes, I am beginning to remember now. There used to be sunsets. And then there were great yellow lights. And one went in behind them through a swinging door.

BILL

Yes, yes, Jim. That was the Blue Bear down at Wimbledon.

JIM
Yes, and the room was all full of golden light. And there was beer with light in it, and some would be spilt on the counter and there was light in that too. And there was a girl standing there with yellow hair. She'd be the other side of that door now, with lamplight in her hair among the angels, and the old smile on her lips if one of them chaffed her, and her pretty teeth a-shining. She would be very near the throne; there was never any harm in Jane.

BILL

No, there was never any 'arm in Jane, Jim.

JIM
Oh, I don't want to see the angels, Bill. But if I could see Jane again (*points in direction of laugh*) he might laugh as much as he cared to whenever I wanted to cry. You can't cry here, you know, Bill.

BILL

You shall see her again, Jim.
[*Jim takes no interest in this remark; he lowers his eyes and goes on with his work.*

BILL

Jim, you shall see her again. You want to get into Heaven, don't you?

JIM (*not raising his eyes*)
Want!

BILL

Jim. Do you know what I've got, Jim?
[*Jim makes no answer, goes on wearily with his work.*

BILL

You remember those iron safes, Jim, how we used to knock them open like walnuts with "Old Nut-cracker"?

JIM (*at work, wearily*)
Empty again.

BILL

Well, I've got Old Nut-cracker. I had him in my hand at the time, and they let me keep him. They thought it would be a nice proof against me.

JIM
Nothing is any good here.

BILL

I'll get in to Heaven, Jim. And you shall come with me because you taught me a livelihood. I couldn't be happy there, like those angels, if I knew of anyone being outside. I'm not like that.
[*Jim goes on with his work.*

BILL

Jim, Jim. You'll see Jane there.

JIM
You'll never get through those gates, Bill. You'll never do it.

BILL

They're only gold, Jim. Gold's soft like lead. Old Nut-cracker would do it if they were steel.

JIM
You'll never do it, Bill.
[*Bill puts a rock against the gates, stands on it to reach the lock and gets to work on the lock. A good instrument to use is an egg-whipper. Jim goes on wearily with his work. As Bill works away, fragments and golden screws begin to fall on the floor.*

BILL

Jim! Old Nut-cracker thinks nothing of it. It's just like cheese to old Nut-cracker.

JIM
They won't let you do it, Bill.

BILL

They don't know what I've got. I'm getting through it like cheese, Jim.

JIM
Suppose it's a mile thick. Suppose it's a million miles thick. Suppose it's a hundred million miles thick.

BILL

Can't be, Jim. These doors are meant to open outward. They couldn't do that if they were more than four inches at the most, not for an Archbishop. They'd stick.

JIM
You remember that great safe we broke open once, what had coal in it.

BILL

This isn't a safe, Jim, this is Heaven. There'll be the old saints with their halos shining and flickering, like windows o' wintry nights. (*Creak, creak, creak*) And angels thick as swallows along a cottage roof the day before they go. (*Creak, creak, creak*) And orchards full of apples as far as you can

see, and the rivers of Tigris and Euphrates, so the Bible says; and a city of gold, for those that care for cities, all full of precious stones; but I'm a bit tired of cities and precious stones. (*Creak, creak, creak*) I'll go out into the fields where the orchards are, by the Tigris and the Euphrates. I shouldn't be surprised if my old mother was there. She never cared much for the way I earned my livelihood (*creak, creak*), but she was a good mother to me. I don't know if they want a good mother in there who would be kind to the angels and sit and smile at them when they sang and soothe them if they were cross. If they let all the good ones in she'll be there all right. (*Suddenly*) Jim! They won't have brought me up against her, will they? That's not fair evidence, Jim.

JIM
It would be just like them to. Very like them.

BILL

If there's a glass of beer to be got in Heaven, or a dish of tripe and onions, or a pipe of 'bacca she'll have them for me when I come to her. She used to know my ways wonderful; and what I liked. And she used to know when to expect me almost anywhere. I used to climb in through the window at any hour and she always knew it was me. (*Creak, creak*) She'll know it's me at the door now, Jim. (*Creak, creak*) It will be all a blaze of light, and I'll hardly know it's her till I get used to it…. But I'll know her among a million angels. There weren't none like her on Earth and there won't be none like her in Heaven…. Jim! I'm through, Jim! One more turn, and old Nut-cracker's done it! It's giving! It's giving! I know the feel of it. *Jim!*
[*At last there is a noise of falling bolts; the gates swing out an inch and are stopped by the rock.*

BILL

Jim! Jim! I've opened it, Jim. I've opened the Gate of Heaven! Come and help me.

JIM (*looks up for a moment with open mouth. Then he mournfully shakes his head and goes on drawing a cork*)

Another one empty.

BILL (*looks down once into the abyss that lies below the Lonely Place*)
Stars. Blooming great stars.
[*Then he moves away the rock on which he stood. The gates move slowly. Jim leaps up and runs to help; they each take a gate and move backward with their faces against it.*

BILL

Hullo, mother! You there? Hullo! You there? It's Bill, mother.
[*The gates swing heavily open, revealing empty night and stars.*

BILL (*staggering and gazing into the revealed Nothing, in which far stars go wandering*)
Stars. Blooming great stars. There *ain't* no Heaven, Jim.
[*Ever since the revelation a cruel and violent laugh has arisen off. It increases in volume and grows louder and louder.*

JIM
That's like them. That's very like them. Yes, they'd do that!
The curtain falls and the laughter still howls on.

THE LOST SILK HAT

PERSONS

The Caller
The Laborer
The Clerk
The Poet
The Policeman
Scene: A fashionable London street.

THE LOST SILK HAT

The Caller stands on a doorstep, "faultlessly dressed," but without a hat. At first he shows despair, then a new thought engrosses him.
Enter the Laborer.

THE CALLER
Excuse me a moment. Excuse me — but — I'd be greatly obliged to you if — if you could see your way — in fact, you can be of great service to me if —

THE LABORER
Glad to do what I can, sir.

CALLER
Well, all I really want you to do is just to ring that bell and go up and say — er — say that you've come to see to the drains, or anything like that, you know, and get hold of my hat for me.

LABORER
Get hold of your 'at!

CALLER
Yes. You see, I left my hat behind most unfortunately. It's in the drawing-room (*points to window*), that room there, half under the long sofa, the far end from the door. And if you could possibly go and get it, why I'd be (*The Laborer's expression changes*) — Why, what's the matter?

LABORER (*firmly*)
I don't like this job.

CALLER
Don't like this job! But my dear fellow, don't be silly, what possible harm — ?

LABORER
Ah-h. That's what I don't know.

CALLER
But what harm can there possibly be in so simple a request? What harm does there seem to be?

LABORER
Oh, it seems all right.

CALLER
Well, then.

LABORER
All these crack jobs do seem all right.

CALLER
But I'm not asking you to rob the house.

LABORER
Don't seem as if you are, certainly, but I don't like the looks of it; what if there's things what I can't 'elp taking when I gets inside?

CALLER
I only want my hat — Here, I say, please don't go away — here's a sovereign, it will only take you a minute.

LABORER
What I want to know —

CALLER
Yes?

LABORER
— Is what's *in* that hat?

CALLER
What's *in* the hat?

LABORER
Yes; that's what I want to know.

CALLER
What's *in* the hat?

LABORER
Yes, you aren't going to give me a sovereign — ?

CALLER
I'll give you two sovereigns.

LABORER
You aren't going to give me a sovereign, and rise it to two sovereigns, for an *empty* hat?

CALLER
But I must have my hat. I can't be seen in the streets like this. There's nothing *in* the hat. What do you think's in the hat?

LABORER
Ah, I'm not clever enough to say that, but it looks as if the papers was in that hat.

CALLER
The papers?

LABORER
Yes, papers proving, if you can get them, that you're the heir to that big house, and some poor innocent will be defrauded.

CALLER
Look here, the hat's absolutely empty. I *must* have my hat. If there's anything in it you shall have it yourself as well as the two pounds, only get me my hat.

LABORER
Well, that seems all right.

CALLER
That's right, then you'll run up and get it?

LABORER
Seems all right to me and seems all right to you. But it's the police what you and I have got to think of. Will it seem all right to them?

CALLER
Oh, for heaven's sake —

LABORER
Ah!

CALLER
What a hopeless fool you are.

LABORER
Ah!

CALLER
Look here.

LABORER
Ah, I got you there, mister.

CALLER
Look here, for goodness sake don't go.

LABORER
Ah! (*Exit*)
[*Enter the Clerk.*

CALLER
Excuse me, sir. Excuse my asking you, but, as you see, I am without a hat. I shall be extraordinarily obliged to you if you would be so very good as to get it for me. Pretend you have come to wind the clocks, you know. I left it in the drawing-room of this house, half under the long sofa, the far end.

CLERK
Oh, er — all right, only —

CALLER
Thanks so much, I am immensely indebted to you. Just say you've come to wind the clocks, you know.

CLERK
I — er — don't think I'm very good at winding clocks, you know.

CALLER
Oh, that's all right, just stand in front of the clock and fool about with it. That's all they ever do. I must warn you there's a lady in the room.

CLERK
Oh!

CALLER
But that's all right, you know. Just walk past up to the clock.

CLERK
But I think, if you don't mind, as there's someone there —

CALLER
Oh, but she's quite young and very, very beautiful and —

CLERK
Why don't you get it yourself?

CALLER
That is impossible.

CLERK
Impossible?

CALLER
Yes, I have sprained my ankle.

CLERK
Oh! Is it bad?

CALLER
Yes, very bad indeed.

CLERK
I don't mind trying to carry you up.

CALLER
No, that would be worse. My foot has to be kept on the ground.

CLERK
But how will you get home?

CALLER
I can walk all right on the flat.

CLERK
I'm afraid I have to be going on. It's rather later than I thought.

CALLER
But for goodness sake don't leave me. You can't leave me here like this without a hat.

CLERK
I'm afraid I must, it's later than I thought.
(*Exit*)
[*Enter the Poet.*

CALLER
Excuse me, sir. Excuse my stopping you. But I should be immensely obliged to you if you would do me a very great favor. I have unfortunately left my hat behind while calling at this house. It is half under the long sofa, at the far end. If you could possibly be so kind as to pretend you have come to tune the piano and fetch my hat for me I should be enormously grateful to you.

POET
But why cannot you get it for yourself?

CALLER
I cannot.

POET
If you would tell me the reason perhaps I could help you.

CALLER
I cannot. I can never enter that house again.

POET
If you have committed a murder, by all means tell me. I am not sufficiently interested in ethics to wish to have you hanged for it.

CALLER
Do I look like a murderer?

POET
No, of course not. I am only saying that you can safely trust me, for not only does the statute book and its penalties rather tend to bore me, but murder itself has always had a certain fascination for me. I write delicate and fastidious lyrics, yet, strange as it may appear, I read every murder trial, and my sympathies are always with the prisoner.

CALLER
But I tell you I am not a murderer.

POET
Then what have you done?

CALLER
I have quarrelled with a lady in that house and have sworn to join the Bosnians and die in Africa.

POET
But this is beautiful.

CALLER
Unfortunately I forgot my hat.

POET
You go to die for a hopeless love, and in a far country; it was the wont of the troubadours.

CALLER
But you will get my hat for me?

POET
That I will gladly do for you. But we must find an adequate reason for entering the house.

CALLER
You pretend to tune the piano.

POET
That, unfortunately, is impossible. The sound of a piano being unskilfully handled is to me what the continual drop of cold water on the same part of the head is said to be in countries where that interesting torture is practised. There is —

CALLER
But what are we to do?

POET
There is a house where kind friends of mine have given me that security and comfort that are a poet's necessity. But there was a governess there and a piano. It is years and years since I was able even to see the faces of those friends without an inward shudder.

CALLER
Well, we'll have to think of something else.

POET
You are bringing back to these unhappy days the romance of an age of which the ballads tell us that kings sometimes fought in no other armor than their lady's nightshirt.

CALLER
Yes, but you know first of all I must get my *hat*.

POET
But why?

CALLER
I cannot possibly be seen in the streets without a hat.

POET
Why not?

CALLER
It can't be done.

POET
But you confuse externals with essentials.

CALLER
I don't know what you call essentials, but being decently dressed in London seems pretty essential to me.

POET
A hat is not one of the essential things of life.

CALLER
I don't want to appear rude, but my hat isn't quite like yours.

POET
Let us sit down and talk of things that matter, things that will be remembered after a hundred years. (*They sit*) Regarded in this light one sees at once the triviality of hats. But to die, and die beautifully for a hopeless love, that is a thing one could make a lyric about. That is the test of essential things — try and imagine them in a lyric. One could not write a lyric about a hat.

CALLER
I don't care whether you could write a lyric about my hat or whether you

couldn't. All I know is that I am not going to make myself absolutely ridiculous by walking about in London without a hat. Will you get it for me or will you not?

POET
To take any part in the tuning of a piano is impossible to me.

CALLER
Well, pretend you've come to look at the radiator. They have one under the window, and I happen to know it leaks.

POET
I suppose it has an artistic decoration on it.

CALLER
Yes, I think so.

POET
Then I decline to look at it or to go near it. I know these decorations in cast iron. I once saw a pot-bellied Egyptian god, named Bēs, and he was *meant* to be ugly, but he wasn't as ugly as these decorations that the twentieth century can make with machinery. What has a plumber got to do with art that he should dare to attempt decoration?

CALLER
Then you won't help me.

POET
I won't look at ugly things and I won't listen to ugly noises, but if you can think of any reasonable plan I don't mind helping you.

CALLER
I can think of nothing else. You don't look like a plumber or a clock-winder. I can think of nothing more. I have had a terrible ordeal and I am not in the condition to think calmly.

POET
Then you will have to leave your hat to its altered destiny.

CALLER
Why can't you think of a plan? If you're a poet, thinking's rather in your line.

POET
If I could bring my thoughts to contemplate so absurd a thing as a hat for any length of time no doubt I could think of a plan, but the very triviality of the theme seems to scare them away.

CALLER (*rising*)
Then I must get it myself.

POET
For Heaven's sake, don't do that! Think what it means!

CALLER
I know it will seem absurd, but not so absurd as walking through London without it.

POET
I don't mean that. But you will make it up. You will forgive each other, and you will marry her and have a family of noisy, pimply children like everyone else, and Romance will be dead. No, don't ring that bell. Go and buy a bayonet, or whatever one does buy, and join the Bosnians.

CALLER
I tell you I can't without a hat.

POET
What is a hat! Will you sacrifice for it a beautiful doom? Think of your bones, neglected and forgotten, lying forlornly because of hopeless love on endless golden sands. "Lying forlorn!" as Keats said. What a word! Forlorn in Africa. The careless Bedouins going past by day, at night the lion's roar, the grievous voice of the desert.

CALLER
As a matter of fact, I don't think you're right in speaking of it as desert. The

Bosnians, I believe, are only taking it because it is supposed to be the most fertile land in the world.

POET
What of that? You will not be remembered by geography and statistics, but by golden-mouthed Romance. And that is how Romance sees Africa.

CALLER
Well, I'm going to get my hat.

POET
Think! Think! If you enter by that door you will never fall among the foremost Bosnians. You will never die in a far-off, lonely land to lie by immense Sahara. And she will never weep for your beautiful doom and call herself cruel in vain.

CALLER
Hark! She is playing the piano. It seems to me that she might be unhappy about it for years. I don't see much good in that.

POET
No. *I* will comfort her.

CALLER
I'm damned if you do! Look here! I don't mind saying, I'm damned if you do.

POET
Calm yourself. Calm yourself. I do not mean in that way.

CALLER
Then what on earth do you mean?

POET
I will make songs about your beautiful death, glad songs and sad songs. They shall be glad because they tell again the noble tradition of the troubadours, and sad because they tell of your sorrowful destiny and of your hopeless love.

I shall make legends also about your lonely bones, telling perhaps how some Arabian men, finding them in the desert by some oasis, memorable in war, wonder who loved them. And then as I read them to her, she weeps perhaps a little, and I read instead of the glory of the soldier, how it overtops our transitory —

CALLER
Look here, I'm not aware that you've ever been introduced to her.

POET
A trifle, a trifle.

CALLER
It seems to me that you're in rather an undue hurry for me to get a Jubu spear in me; but I'm going to get my hat first.

POET
I appeal to you. I appeal to you in the name of beautiful battles, high deeds, and lost causes; in the name of love-tales told to cruel maidens and told in vain. In the name of stricken hearts broken like beautiful harp-strings, I appeal to you.
I appeal in the ancient holy name of Romance: *do not ring that bell*.
[*Caller rings the bell.*

POET (*sits down, abject*)
You will marry. You will sometimes take a ticket with your wife as far as Paris. Perhaps as far as Cannes. Then the family will come; a large sprawling family as far as the eye can see (I speak in hyperbole). You'll earn money and feed it and be like all the rest. No monument will ever be set up to your memory but —
[*Servant answers bell. Caller says something inaudible. Exit through door.*

POET (*rising, lifting hand*)
But let there be graven in brass upon this house: Romance was born again here out of due time and died young. (*He sits down*)
[*Enter Laborer and Clerk with Policeman. The music stops.*

POLICEMAN
Anything wrong here?

POET
Everything's wrong. They're going to kill Romance.

POLICEMAN (*to Laborer*)
This gentleman doesn't seem quite right somehow.

LABORER
They're none of them quite right to-day.
[*Music starts again.*

POET
My God! It is a duet.

POLICEMAN
He seems a bit wrong somehow.

LABORER
You should 'a seen the other one.

CURTAIN

PLAYS OF GODS AND MEN



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Dramatis Personæ
A Night at an Inn

Preface

Lest any idle person might think that I have had time to write plays during the last few years I may mention that the first act of *The Tents of the Arabs* was written on September 3rd, and the second act on September 8th, 1910.

The first and second acts of *The Laughter of the Gods* were written on January 29th, and the third act on February 2nd and 3rd, 1911. *A Night at an Inn* was written on January 17th, 1912, and *The Queen's Enemies* on April 19, 20, 21, 24, 28, 29, 1913.

Dunsany, Captain
Royal Inniskilling Fusileers.

The Laughter of the Gods

A Tragedy in Three Acts

Dramatis Personæ

King Karnos
Voice-of-the-Gods (a prophet)
Ichtharion
Ludibras
Harpagas
First Sentry
Second Sentry
One of the Camel Guard
An Executioner
The Queen
Tharmia (wife of Ichtharion)
Arolind (wife of Ludibras)
Carolyx (wife of Harpagas)
Attendants

Act I

Time: About the time of the decadence in Babylon.

Scene: The jungle city of Thek in the reign of King Karnos.

Tharmia:
You know that my lineage is almost divine.

Arolind:
My father's sword was so terrible that he had to hide it with a cloak.

Tharmia:
He probably did that because there were no jewels in the scabbard.

Arolind:
There were emeralds in it that outstared the sea.

* * * * * * * *

Tharmia:
Now I must leave you here and go down among the shops for I have not changed my hair since we came to Thek.

Ichtharion:
Have you not brought that from Barbul-el-Sharnak?

Tharmia:
It was not necessary. The King would not take his court where they could not obtain necessities.

Arolind:
May I go with your Sincerity?

Tharmia:
Indeed, Princely Lady, I shall be glad of your company.

Arolind:
[To Ludibras] I wish to see the other palaces in Thek, *[To Tharmia]* then we can go on beyond the walls to see what princes live in the neighbourhood.

Tharmia:
It will be delightful.
[Exeunt Tharmia and Arolind]

Ichtharion:
Well, we are here in Thek.

Ludibras:
How lucky we are that the King has come to Thek. I feared he would never come.

Ichtharion:
It is a most fair city.

Ludibras:
When he tarried year after year in monstrous Barbul-el-Sharnak, I feared that I would see the sun rise never more in the windy glorious country. I feared we should live always in Barbul-el-Sharnak and be buried among houses.

Ichtharion:
It is mountainous with houses: there are no flowers there. I wonder how the winds come into it.

Ludibras:
Ah. Do you know that it is I that brought him here at last? I gave him orchids from a far country. At last he noticed them. “Those are good flowers,” said he. “They come from Thek,” I said. “Thek is purple with them. It seems purple far out on the sand to the camel men.” Then…

Ichtharion:
No, it was not you brought him. He saw a butterfly once in Barbul-el-Sharnak. There had not been one there for seven years. It was lucky for us

that it lived; I used to send for hundreds, but they all died but that one when they came to Barbul-el-Sharnak. The King saw it.

Ludibras:
It was since then that he noticed my purple orchids.

Ichtharion:
Something changed in his mind when he saw the butterfly. He became quite different. He would not have noticed a flower but for that.

Ludibras:
He came to Thek in order to see the orchids.

Ichtharion:
Come, come. We are here. Nothing else matters.

Ludibras:
Yes, we are here. How beautiful are the orchids.

Ichtharion:
What a beautiful thing the air is in the morning. I stand up very early and breathe it from my casement; not in order to nourish my body, you understand, but because it is the wild, sweet air of Thek.

Ludibras:
Yes, it is wonderful rising up in the morning. It seems all fresh from the fields.

Ichtharion:
It took us two days to ride out of Bar-el-Sharnak. Do you remember how men stared at our camels? No one had gone away from the city for years.

Ludibras:
I think it is not easy to leave a great city. It seems to grow thicker around you, and you forget the fields.

Ichtharion: *[looking off]*
The jungle is like a sea lying there below us. The orchids that blaze on it are

like Tyrian ships, all rich with purple of that wonderful fish; they have even dyed their sails with it.

Ludibras:
They are not like ships because they do not move. They are like… They are like no tangible thing in all the world. They are like faint, beautiful songs of an unseen singer; they are like temptations to some unknown sin. They make me think of the tigers that slip through the gloom below them.
[Enter Harpagas and a Noble of the Court, with spears and leather belts.]

Ichtharion:
Where are you going?

Harpagas:
We are going hunting.

Ichtharion:
Hunting! How beautiful!

Harpagas:
A little street goes down from the palace door; the other end of it touches the very jungle.

Ludibras:
O, heavenly city of Thek.

Ichtharion:
Have you ever before gone hunting?

Harpagas:
No; I have dreamed of it. In Barbul-el-Sharnak I nearly forgot my dream.

Ichtharion:
Man was not made for cities. I did not know this once.

Ludibras:
I will come with you.

Ichtharion:
I will come with you, too. We will go down by the little street, and there will be the jungle. I will fetch a spear as we go.

Ludibras:
What shall we hunt in the jungle?

Harpagas:
They say there are kroot and abbax; and tigers, some say, have been heard of.

Noble:
We must never go back to Barbul-el-Sharnak again.

Ichtharion:
You may rely on us.

Ludibras:
We shall keep the King in Thek.
[Exeunt, leaving two sentries standing beside the throne.]

1st Sentry:
They are all very glad to be in Thek. I, too, am glad.

2nd Sentry:
It is a very little city. Two hundred of these cities would not build Barbul-el-Sharnak.

1st Sentry:
No. But it is a finer palace, and Barbul-el-Sharnak is the centre of the world; men have drawn together there.

2nd Sentry:
I did not know there was a palace like this outside Barbul-el-Sharnak.

1st Sentry:
It was built in the days of the forefathers. They built palaces in those days.

2nd Sentry:
They must be in the jungle by now. It is quite close. How glad they were to go.

1st Sentry:
Yes, they were glad. Men do not hunt for tigers in Barbul-el-Sharnak.
[Enter Tharmia and Arolind weeping.]

Tharmia:
O it is terrible.

Arolind:

O! O! O!

1st Sentry: *[To 2nd Sentry]*
Something has happened.
[Enter Carolyx.]

Carolyx:
What is it, princely ladies?
[To Sentries] Go. Go away.
[Exeunt Sentries.]
What has happened?

Tharmia:
O. We went down a little street.

Carolyx:
Yes. Yes.

Arolind:
The main street of the city.
[Both weep quietly.]

Carolyx:
Yes? Yes? Yes?

Tharmia:
It ends in the jungle.

Carolyx:
You went into the jungle! There must be tigers there.

Tharmia:
No.

Arolind:
No.

Carolyx:
What did you do?

Tharmia:
We came back.

Carolyx: *[in a voice of anguish]*
What did you see in the street?

Tharmia:
Nothing.

Arolind:
Nothing.

Carolyx:
Nothing?

Tharmia:
There are no shops.

Arolind:
We cannot buy new hair.

Tharmia:
We cannot buy *[sobs]* gold-dust to put upon our hair.

Arolind:
There are no *[sobs]* neighbouring princes.
[Carolyx bursts bitterly into tears and continues to weep.]

Tharmia:
Barbul-el-Sharnak, Barbul-el-Sharnak. O why did the King leave Barbul-el-Sharnak?

Arolind:
Barbul-el-Sharnak. Its streets were all of agate.

Tharmia:
And there were shops where one bought beautiful hair.

Carolyx:
The King must go at once.

Tharmia: *[calmer now.]*
He shall go tomorrow. My husband shall speak to him.

Arolind:
Perhaps my husband might have more influence.
Tharmia and Arolind:
My husband brought him here.

Tharmia:
What!

Arolind:
Nothing. What did you say?

Tharmia:
I said nothing. I thought you spoke.

Carolyx:
It may be better for my husband to persuade him, for he was ever opposed to his coming to Thek.

Tharmia: *[To Arolind]*
He could have but little influence with His Majesty since the King *has* come to Thek.

Arolind:
No. It will be better for our husbands to arrange it.

Carolyx:
I myself have some influence with the Queen.

Tharmia:
It is of no use. Her nerves are all a-quiver. She weeps if you speak with her. If you argue a matter with her she cries aloud and maidens must come and fan her and put scent on her hands.

Arolind:
She never leaves her chamber and the King would not listen to her.

Tharmia:
Hark, they are coming back. They are singing a hunting song…. why, they have killed a beast. All four of the men are bringing it on two branches.

Arolind: *[bored]*
What kind of beast is it?

Tharmia:
I do not know. It seems to have barbed horns.

Carolyx:
We must go and meet them.
[The song is loud and joyous.]
[Exeunt by the way that the Sentries went.]
[Enter Sentries.]

1st Sentry:
Whatever it is has passed away again for they were smiling.

2nd Sentry:
They feared that their husbands were lost and now they return in safety.

1st Sentry:
You do not know, for you do not understand women.

2nd Sentry:
I understand them quite as well as you.

1st Sentry:
That is what I say. You do not understand them. I do not understand them.

2nd Sentry:
……Oh. *[A pause.]*

1st Sentry:
We shall never leave Thek now.

2nd Sentry:
Why shall we never leave it?

1st Sentry:
Did you not hear how glad they were when they sang the hunting song? They say a wild dog does not turn from the trail, they will go on hunting now.

2nd Sentry:
But will the King stay here?

1st Sentry:
He only does what Ichtharion and Ludibras persuade him. He does not listen to the Queen.

2nd Sentry:
The Queen is mad.

1st Sentry:
She is not mad but she has a curious sickness, she is always frightened

though there is nothing to fear.

2nd Sentry:
That would be a dreadful sickness; one would fear that the roof might fall on one from above or the earth break in pieces beneath. I would rather be mad than to fear things like that.

1st Sentry: *[looking straight before him]*
Hush.
[Enter King and retinue. He sits on the throne. Enter from other side Ichtharion, Ludibras, and Harpagas, each with his wife beside him, hand in hand. Each couple bows before the King, still hand in hand; then they seat themselves. The King nods once to each couple.]

King: *[To Tharmia]*
Well, your Sincerity, I trust that you are glad to have come to Thek.

Tharmia:
Very glad, your Majesty.

King: *[To Arolind]*
This is pleasanter, is it not, than Barbul-el-Sharnak?

Arolind:
Far pleasanter, your Majesty.

King:
And you, princely lady Carolyx, find all that you need in Thek?

Carolyx: More than all, your Majesty.

King: *[To Harpagas]*
Then we can stay here long, can we not?

Harpagas:
There are reasons of State why that were dangerous.

King:
Reasons of State? Why should we not stay here?

Harpagas:
Your Majesty, there is a legend in the World, that he who is greatest in the city of Barbul-el-Sharnak is the greatest in the world.

King:
I had not heard that legend.

Harpagas:
Your Majesty, little legends do not hive in the sacred ears of kings; nevertheless they hum among lesser men from generation to generation.

King:
I will not go for a legend to Barbul-el-Sharnak.

Harpagas:
Your Majesty, it is very dangerous….

King: *[To Ladies]*
We will discuss things of State which little interest your Sincerities.

Tharmia: *[rising]*
Your Majesty, we are ignorant of these things.
[Exeunt.]

King: *[To Ichtharion and Ludibras]*
We will rest from things of State for awhile, shall we not? We will be happy, (shall we not?) in this ancient beautiful palace.

Ludibras:
If your Majesty commands, we must obey.

King:
But is not Thek most beautiful? Are not the jungle orchids a wonder and a glory?

Ludibras:
They have been thought so, your Majesty; they were pretty in Barbul-el-Sharnak where they were rare.

King:
But when the sun comes over them in the morning, when the dew is on them still; are they not glorious then? Indeed, they are very glorious.

Ludibras:
I think they would be glorious if they were blue, and there were fewer of them.

King:
I do not think so. But you, Ichtharion, you think the city beautiful?

Ichtharion:
Yes, your Majesty.

King:
Ah. I am glad you love it. It is to me adorable.

Ichtharion:
I do not love it, your Majesty. I hate it very much. I know it is beautiful because your Majesty has said so.

Ludibras:
This city is dangerously unhealthy, your Majesty.

Harpagas:
It is dangerous to be absent from Barbul-el-Sharnak.

Ichtharion:
We implore your Majesty to return to the centre of the world.

King:
I will not go again to Barbul-el-Sharnak.

[Exeunt King with attendants. Ichtharion, Ludibras and Harpagas remain.]

[Enter Arolind and Carolyx; each goes up to her husband, very affectionate.]

Arolind:
And you talked to the King?

Ludibras:
Yes.

Arolind:
You told him he must go back to Barbul-el-Sharnak at once?

Ludibras:
Well, I ——

Arolind:
When does he start?

Ludibras:
He did not say he will start.

Arolind:
What?

Carolyx:
We are not going?
[Arolind and Carolyx weep and step away from their husbands.]

Ludibras:
But we spoke to the King.

Arolind:
O, we must stay and die here.

Ludibras:
But we did what we could.

Arolind:
O, I shall be buried in Thek.

Ludibras:
I can do no more.

Arolind:
My clothes are torn, my hair is old. I am in rags.

Ludibras:
I am sure you are beautifully dressed.

Arolind: *[full height]*
Beautifully dressed! Of course I am beautifully dressed! But who is there to see me? I am alone in the jungle, and here I shall be buried.

Ludibras:
But ——

Arolind:
Oh, will you not leave me alone? Is nothing sacred to you? Not even my grief?
[Exeunt Arolind and Carolyx.]

Harpagas: *[To Ludibras]*
What are we to do?

Ludibras:
All women are alike.

Ichtharion:
I do not allow my wife to speak to me like that.
[Exeunt Harpagas and Ludibras.]
I hope Tharmia will not weep; it is very distressing to see a woman in tears.
[Enter Tharmia.]
Do not be unhappy, do not be at all unhappy. But I have been unable to persuade the King to return to Barbul-el-Sharnak. You will be happy here after a little while.

Tharmia: *[breaks into loud laughter]*
You are the King's adviser. Ha-ha-ha! *You* are the Grand High Vizier of the Court. Ha-ha-ha. *You* are the warder of the golden wand. Ha-ha-ha O, go and throw biscuits to the King's dog.

Ichtharion:
What!

Tharmia:
Throw little ginger biscuits to the King's dog. Perhaps he will obey you. Perhaps you will have some influence with the King's dog if you feed him with little biscuits. You ——
[Laughs and exits. Ichtharion sits with his miserable head in his hands.]
[Reenter Ludibras and Harpagas.]

Ludibras:
Has her Sincerity, the princely Lady Tharmia, been speaking with you?

Ichtharion:
She spoke a few words.
[Ludibras and Harpagas sigh.]
We must leave Thek. We must depart from Thek.

Ludibras:
What, without the King?

Harpagas:
No.

Ichtharion:
No. They would say in Barbul-el-Sharnak "these were once at Court," and men that we have flogged would spit in our faces.

Ludibras:
Who can command a King?

Harpagas:
Only the gods.

Ludibras:
The gods? There are no gods now. We have been civilised over three thousand years. The gods that nursed our infancy are dead, or gone to nurse younger nations.

Ichtharion:
I refuse the listen to —— O, the sentries are gone. No, the gods are no use to us; they were driven away by the decadence.

Harpagas:
We are not in the decadence here. Barbul-el-Sharnak is in a different age. The city of Thek is scarcely civilised.

Ichtharion:
But everybody lives in Barbul-el-Sharnak.

Harpagas:
The gods ——

Ludibras:
The old prophet is coming.

Harpagas:
He believes as much in the gods as you or I do.

Ludibras:
Yes, but we must not speak as though we knew that.
[Voice-of-the-Gods (a prophet) walks across the stage.]
Ichtharion, Ludibras, and Harpagas: *[rising]*
The gods are good.
Voice-of-the-Gods:
They are benignant. *[exit]*

Ichtharion:
Listen! Let him prophesy to the King. Let him bid the King go hence lest they smite the city.

Ludibras:
Can we make him do it?

Ichtharion:
I think we can make him do it.

Harpagas:
The King is more highly civilised even than we are. He will not care for the gods.

Ichtharion:
He cannot ignore them; the gods crowned his forefather and if there are no gods who made him King?

Ludibras:
Why, that is true. He must obey a prophecy.

Ichtharion:
If the King disobeys the gods the people will tear him asunder, whether the gods created the people or the people created the gods.
[Harpagas slips out after the Prophet.]

Ludibras:
If the King discovers this we shall be painfully tortured.

Ichtharion:
How can the King discover it?

Ludibras:
He knows that there are no gods.

Ichtharion:
No man knows that of a certainty.

Ludibras:
But if there are —— !
[Enter Prophet with Harpagas. Ichtharion quickly sends Ludibras and Harpagas away.]

Ichtharion:
There is a delicate matter concerning the King.
Voice-of-the-Gods:
Then I can help you little for I only serve the gods.

Ichtharion:
It also concerns the gods.
Voice-of-the-Gods:
Ah. Then I hearken.

Ichtharion:
This city is for the King, whose body is fragile, a very unhealthy city. Moreover, there is no work here that a King can profitably do. Also it is dangerous for Barbul-el-Sharnak to be long without a King, lest ——
Voice-of-the-Gods:
Does this concern the gods?

Ichtharion:
In this respect it does concern the gods — that if the gods knew this they would warn the King by inspiring you to make a prophecy. As they do not know this ——
Voice-of-the-Gods:
The gods know all things.

Ichtharion:
The gods do not know things that are not true. This is not strictly true ——
Voice-of-the-Gods:
It is written and hath been said that the gods cannot lie.

Ichtharion:
The gods of course cannot lie, but a prophet may sometimes utter a prophecy that is a good prophecy and helpful to men, thereby pleasing the gods, although the prophecy is not a true one.
Voice-of-the-Gods:
The gods speak through my mouth; my breath is my own breath, I am human and mortal, but my voice is from the gods and the gods cannot lie.

Ichtharion:
Is it wise in an age when the gods have lost their power to anger powerful men for the sake of the gods?
Voice-of-the-Gods:
It *is* wise.

Ichtharion:
We are three men and you are alone with us. Will the gods save you if we want to put you to death and slip away with your body into the jungle?
Voice-of-the-Gods:
If you should do this thing the gods have willed it. If they have not willed it you cannot.

Ichtharion:
We do not wish to do it. Nevertheless you will make this prophecy — you will go before the King and you will say that the gods have spoken and that within three days' time, for the sake of vengeance upon some unknown man who is in this city, they will overthrow all Thek unless every man is departed.
Voice-of-the-Gods:
I will not do it, for the gods cannot lie.

Ichtharion:
Has it not been the custom since unremembered time for a prophet to have two wives?
Voice-of-the-Gods:
Most certainly. It is the law.
[Ichtharion holds up three fingers.]
What!

Ichtharion:
Three.
Voice-of-the-Gods:
Do not betray me. It was long ago.

Ichtharion:
You will be allowed to serve the gods no more if men know this. The gods

will not protect you in this matter for you have offended also against the gods.
Voice-of-the-Gods:
It is worse that the gods should lie. Do not betray me.

Ichtharion:
I go to tell the others what I know.
Voice-of-the-Gods:
I will make the false prophecy.

Ichtharion:
Ah. You have chosen wisely.
Voice-of-the-Gods:
When the gods punish me who make them lie, they will know what punishment to give to you.

Ichtharion:
The gods will not punish us. It is long ago that the gods used to punish men.
Voice-of-the-Gods:
The gods will punish us.

Act II

[Same scene.]
[Same day.]

King Karnos: *[pointing off L.]*
Look at them now, are they not beautiful? They catch the last rays of the lingering sun. Can you say that the orchids are not beautiful now?

Ichtharion:
Your majesty, we were wrong, they are most beautiful. They tower up from the jungle to take the sun. They are like the diadem of some jubilant king.

King Karnos:
Ah. Now you have come to love the beauty of Thek.

Ichtharion:
Yes, yes, your Majesty, I see it now. I would live in this city always.

King Karnos:
Yes, we will live here always. There is no city lovelier than Thek. Am I not right?

Ludibras:
Your Majesty, no city is like it.

King Karnos:
Ah. I am always right.

Tharmia:
How beautiful is Thek.

Arolind:
Yes, it is like a god.
[Three notes are stricken on a sonorous gong.]

Whispers: *[on]*
There has been a prophecy. There has been a prophecy.

King Karnos:
Ah! there has been a prophecy. Bring in the prophet. *[Exit attendant.]*
[Enter mournfully with dejected head and walking very slowly Voice-of-the-Gods.]

King Karnos:
You have made a prophecy.
Voice-of-the-Gods:
I have made a prophecy.

King Karnos:
I would hear that prophecy. *[A pause.]*
Voice-of-the-Gods:
Your Majesty, the gods in three days' time ——

King Karnos:
Stop! Is it not usual to begin with certain words? *[A pause.]*
Voice-of-the-Gods:
It is written and hath been said… that the gods cannot lie.

King Karnos:
That is right.
Voice-of-the-Gods:
That the gods cannot lie.

King Karnos:
Yes. Yes.
Voice-of-the-Gods:
In three days' time the gods will destroy this city for vengeance upon some man, unless all men desert it.

King Karnos:
The gods will destroy Thek!
Voice-of-the-Gods:
Yes.

King Karnos:
When will this happen?
Voice-of-the-Gods:
It must be in three days' time.

King Karnos:
How will it happen?
Voice-of-the-Gods:
Why. It will happen.

King Karnos:
How?
Voice-of-the-Gods:
Why… there will be a sound… as the riving of wood… a sound as of thunder coming up from the ground. A cleft will run like a mouse across the floor. There will be a red light, and then no light at all, and in the darkness Thek shall tumble in.
[The King sits in deep thought. Exit Prophet slowly; he begins to weep, then casts his cloak over his face. He stretches out his arms to grope his way and is led by the hand. The King sits thinking.]

Tharmia:
Save us, your Majesty.

Arolind:
Save us.

Ichtharion:
We must fly, your Majesty.

Ludibras:
We must escape swiftly.
[The King sits still in silence. He lifts a stick on his right to beat a little silver bell; but puts it down again. At last he lifts it up and strikes the bell. An Attendant enters.]

King Karnos:
Bring back that prophet. *[Attendant bows and exits.]*
[The King looks thoughtful. The rest have a frightened look. Re-enter Prophet.]

King Karnos:
When the gods prophesy rain in the season of rain, or the death of an old man, we believe them. But when the gods prophesy something incredible and ridiculous, such as happens not nowadays, and hath not been heard of since the fall of Bleth, then our credulity is overtaxed. It is possible that a man should lie; it is not possible that the gods should destroy a city nowadays.
Voice-of-the-Gods:
O King, have mercy.

King Karnos:
What, would you be sent safe away while your King is destroyed by the gods?
Voice-of-the-Gods:
No, no, your Majesty. I would stay in the city, your Majesty. But if the gods do not destroy the city, if the gods have misled me.

King Karnos:
If the gods have misled you they have chosen your doom. Why ask for mercy from me?
Voice-of-the-Gods:
If the gods have misled me, and punish me no further, I ask mercy from you, O King.

King Karnos:
If the gods have misled you, let the gods protect you from my executioner.

1st Sentry: *[Laughs aside to 2nd Sentry]*
Very witty.

2nd Sentry:
Yes, yes. *[Laughs too.]*

King Karnos:
If the doom fall not at sunset, why then the executioner ——
Voice-of-the-Gods:
Your Majesty!

King Karnos:
No more! No doubt the gods will destroy the whole city at sunset.
[The sentries titter. The Prophet is led away.]

Ichtharion:
Your Majesty! Is it safe to kill a prophet, even for any guilt? Will not the people ——

King Karnos:
Not while he is a prophet; but if he has prophesied falsely his death is due to the gods. The people once even burned a prophet themselves because he had taken three wives.

Ichtharion: *[Aside to Ludibras]*
It is most unfortunate, but what can we do?

Ludibras: *[Aside to Ichtharion]*
He will not be killed if he betray us instead.

Ichtharion: *[Aside]*
Why… that is true.
[All are whispering.]

King Karnos:
Why do you whisper?

Tharmia:
Your Majesty, we fear that the gods will destroy us all and…

King Karnos:
You do not fear it?

[Dead silence. A plaintive lament off. Enter the Queen. Her face is pale as paper.]

Queen: *[loq.]*
O your Majesty. Your Majesty. I have heard the lutanist, I have heard the lutanist.

King Karnos:
She means the lute that is heard by those about to die.

Queen:
I have heard Gog-Owza, the lutanist, playing his lute. And I shall die,
O I shall die.

King Karnos:
No. No. No. You have not heard Gog-Owza. Send for her maidens, send for the Queen's maidens.

Queen:
I have heard Gog-Owza playing, and I shall die.

King Karnos:
Hark. Why, I hear it too. That is not Gog-Owza, it is only a man with a lute; I hear it too.

Queen:
O the King hears it too. The King will die. The great King will die. My child will be desolate for the King will die. Mourn, people of the jungle. Mourn, citizens of Thek. And thou, O Barbul-el-Sharnak, O metropolitan city, mourn thou in the midst of the nations, for the great King will die.

King Karnos:
No. No. No. *[To oldest present.]* Listen you. Do you not hear it?

The Oldest:
Yes, your Majesty.

King Karnos:
You see it is a real lute. That is no spirit playing.

Queen:
O but he is old; in a few days he will die; it is Gog-Owza, and the King will die.

King Karnos:
No, no, it is only a man. Look out of the window there. *[To any Young Man.]*
The Young Man:
It is dark, your Majesty, and I cannot see.

Queen:
It is the spirit Gog-Owza.
The Young Man:
I can hear the music clearly.

King Karnos:
He is young.

Queen:
The young are always in danger; they go about among swords. He will die too and the great King and I. In a few days we will be buried.

King Karnos:
Let us all listen; we cannot all die in a few days' time.

Tharmia:
I hear it clearly.

Queen:
Women are blossoms in the hand of Death. They are often close to Death. She will die too.

All:
I hear it. I hear it. And I. And I. And I. It is only a man with a lute.

Queen: *[pacified]*
I should like to see him, then I should know for certain.
[She looks out of the casement.]
No, it is too dark.

King Karnos:
We will call the man if you wish it.

Queen:
Yes, I shall be easy then, and then I shall sleep.
[King instructs Attendants to enquire without. Queen at window still.]

King Karnos:
It is some man down by the river playing his lute. I am told that sometimes a man will play all night.

Tharmia: *[Aside]*
That's their amusement here.

Arolind: *[Aside]*
Well, really, its almost all the music we get.

Tharmia: *[Aside]*
It really is.

Arolind: *[Aside]*
O how I cry for the golden Hall of Song in Barbul-el-Sharnak. I think it would almost hold the city of Thek.
[Re-enter Attendant]

Attendant:
It is only a common lute, your Majesty. All hear it except one man.

King Karnos:
All except one, did you say? Ah, thank you.
[To Queen at window.]
It is only a common lute.

Queen:
One man did not hear it. Who was he? Where is he? Why didn't he?

Attendant:
He was riding back again to Barbul-el-Sharnak. He was just starting. He said he did not hear it.

Queen:
Oh, send for him here.

Attendant:
He is gone, your Majesty.

Queen:
Overtake him quick. Overtake him.
[Exit Attendant.]

Tharmia: *[Aside to Arolind]*
I wish that I were going back to Barbul-el-Sharnak.

Arolind:
O to be again at the centre of the world!

Tharmia:
Were we not talking of the golden hall?

Arolind:
Ah, yes. How lovely it was! How beautiful it was when the King was there and strange musicians came from the heathen lands with huge plumes in their hair, and played on instruments that we did not know.

Tharmia:
The Queen was better then. The music eased her.

Arolind:
This lute player is making her quite mad.

Tharmia:
Well. Well. No wonder. He has a mournful sound. Listen!

Arolind:
Do not let us listen. It makes me feel cold.

Tharmia:
He cannot play like Nagra or dear Trehannion. It is because we have heard Trehannion that we do not like to listen.

Arolind:
I do not like to listen because I feel cold.

Tharmia:
We feel cold because the Queen has opened the casement.

King Karnos: *[To Attendant]*
Find the man that is playing the lute and give him this and let him cease to play upon his lute.
[Exit Attendant]

Ichtharion:
Hark! He is playing still.

King Karnos:
Yes, we all hear him; it is only a man.
[To another or same Attendant]
Let him stop playing.

Attendant:
Yes, your Majesty. *[Exit]*
[Enter an Attendant with another]

Attendant:
This is the man that does not hear the lute.

King Karnos:
Ah. You are deaf, then, are you not?

Man:
No, your Majesty.

King Karnos:
You hear me clearly?

Man:
Yes, your Majesty.

King Karnos:
Listen! …Now you hear the lute?

Man:
No, your Majesty.

King Karnos:
Who sent you to Barbul-el-Sharnak?

Man:
The captain of the camel-guard sent me, your Majesty.

King Karnos:
Then go and never return. You are deaf and also a fool. *[To himself]* The Queen will not sleep. *[To Another]* Bring music, bring music quickly. *[Muttering]* The Queen will not sleep.
[The man bows low and departs. He says farewell to a sentry.
The Queen leans from the casement muttering. Music heard off.]

Queen:
Ah, that is earthly music, but of that other tune I have a fear.

King Karnos:
We have all heard it. Comfort yourself. Calm yourself.

Queen:
One man does not hear it.

King Karnos:
But he has gone away. We all hear it now.

Queen:
I wish that I could see him.

King Karnos:
A man is a small thing and the night very large and full of wonders.
You may well not see him.

Queen:
I should like to see him. Why cannot I see him?

King Karnos:
I have sent the camel-guard to search for him and to stop him playing his lute.
[To Ichtharion]
Do not let the Queen know about this prophecy. She would think… I do not know what she would think.

Ichtharion:
No, your Majesty.

King Karnos:
The Queen has a very special fear of the gods.

Ichtharion:
Yes, your Majesty.

Queen:
You speak of me?

King Karnos:
O no. We speak of the gods.
[The earthly music ceases.]

Queen:
O do not speak of the gods. The gods are very terrible; all the dooms that

shall ever be come forth from the gods. In misty windings of the wandering hills they forge the future even as on an anvil. The future frightens me.

King Karnos:
Call the Queen's maidens. Send quickly for her maidens. Do not let the future frighten you.

Queen:
Men laugh at the gods; they often laugh at the gods. I am more sure that the gods laugh too. It is dreadful to think of the laughter of the gods. O the lute! the lute! How clearly I hear the lute. But you all hear it? Do you not? You swear that you all hear it?

King Karnos:
Yes, yes. We all hear the lute. It is only a man playing.

Queen:
I wish I could see him. Then I should know that he was only a man and not Gog-Owza, most terrible of the gods. I should be able to sleep then.

King Karnos: *[Soothingly]*
Yes, yes.
[Enter Attendant]
Here comes the man that I have sent to find him. You have found the lute player. Tell the queen that you have found the lute player.

Attendant:
The camel-guard have searched, your Majesty, and cannot find any man that is playing a lute.
[Curtain]

Act III

[Three days elapse.]

Tharmia:
We have done too much. We have done too much. Our husbands will be put to death. The prophet will betray them and they will be put to death.

Arolind:
O what shall we do?

Tharmia:
It would have been better for us to have been clothed with rags than to bring our husbands to death by what we have done.

Arolind:
We have done much and we have angered a king, and (who knows!) we may have angered even the gods.

Tharmia:
Even the gods! We are become like Helen. When my mother was a child she saw her once. She says she was the quietest and gentlest of creatures and wished only to be loved, and yet because of her there was a war for four or five years at Troy, and the city was burned which had remarkable towers; and some of the gods of the Greeks took her side, my mother says, and some she says were against her, and they quarrelled upon Olympus where they live, and all because of Helen.

Arolind:
O don't, don't. It frightens me. I only want to be prettily dressed and see my husband happy.

Tharmia:
Have you seen the prophet?

Arolind:
Oh yes, I have seen him. He walks about the palace. He is free but cannot escape.

Tharmia:
What does he look like? Has he a frightened look?

Arolind:
He mutters as he walks. Sometimes he weeps; and then he puts his cloak over his face.

Tharmia:
I fear that he will betray them.

Arolind:
I do not trust a prophet. He is the go-between of gods and men. They are so far apart. How can he be true to both?

Tharmia:
This prophet is false to the gods. It is a hateful thing for a prophet to prophesy falsely.
[Prophet walks across hanging his head and muttering.]

Prophet:
The gods have spoken a lie. The gods have spoken a lie. Can all their vengeance ever atone for this?

Tharmia:
He spoke of vengeance.

Arolind:
O he will betray them.
[They weep. Enter the Queen.]

Queen:
Why do you weep? Ah, you are going to die. You heard the death-lute. You do well to weep.

Tharmia:
No, your Majesty. It is the man that has played for the last three days. We all heard him.

Queen:
Three days. Yes, it is three days. Gog-Owza plays no longer than three days. Gog-Owza grows weary then. He has given his message and he will go away.

Tharmia:
We have all heard him, your Majesty, except the deaf young man that went back to Barbul-el-Sharnak. We hear him now.

Queen: Yes! But nobody has seen him yet. My maidens have searched for him but they have not found him.

Tharmia:
Your Majesty, my husband heard him, and Ludibras, and while they live we know there is nothing to fear. If the King grew angry with them — because of any idle story that some jealous man might tell — some criminal wishing to postpone his punishment — if the King were to grow angry with them they would open their veins; they would never survive his anger. Then we should all of us say, "Perhaps it was Gog-Owza that Ichtharion or Ludibras heard."

Queen:
The King will never grow angry with Ichtharion or Ludibras.

Tharmia:
Your Majesty would not sleep if the King grew angry with them.

Queen:
Oh, no. I should not sleep; it would be terrible.

Tharmia:
Your Majesty would be wakeful all night long and cry.

Queen:
Oh, yes. I should not sleep; I should cry all night. *[Exit]*

Arolind:
She has no influence with the King.

Tharmia:
No. But he hates to hear her cry all night.
[Enter Ichtharion]
I am sure that the prophet will betray you. But we have spoken to the Queen. We have told her it would be dreadful if the King were to grow angry with you, and she things she will cry all night if he is angry.

Ichtharion:
Poor frightened brain! How strong are little fancies! She should be a beautiful Queen. But she goes about white and crying, in fear of the gods. The gods, that are no more than shadows in the moonlight. Man's fear rises weird and large in all this mystery and makes a shadow of himself upon the ground and Man jumps and says "the gods." Why they are less than shadows; we have seen shadows, we have not seen the gods.

Tharmia:
O do not speak like that. There used to be gods. They overthrew Bleth dreadfully. And if they still live on in the dark of the hills, why, they might hear your words.

Ichtharion:
Why! you grow frightened, too. Do not be frightened. We will go and speak with the prophet, while you follow the Queen; be much with her, and do not let her forget that she will cry if the King should be angry with us.

Arolind:
I am almost afraid when I am with the Queen; I do not like to be with her.

Tharmia:
She could not hurt us; she is afraid of all things.

Arolind:
She makes me have huge fears of prodigious things.
[Exeunt Tharmia and Arolind.]
[Enter Ludibras.]

Ludibras:
The prophet is coming this way.

Ichtharion:
Sit down. We must speak with him. He will betray us.

Ludibras:
Why should the prophet betray us?

Ichtharion:
Because the guilt of the false prophecy is not his guilt; it is ours; and the King may spare him if he tells him that. Again, he mutters of vengeance as he walks; many have told me.

Ludibras:
The King will not spare him even if he betrays us. It was he that spoke the false prophecy to the King.

Ichtharion:
The King does not in his heart believe in the gods. It is for cheating him that the prophet is to die. But if he knows we had planned it ——

Ludibras:
What can we say to the prophet?

Ichtharion:
Why, we can say nothing. But we can learn what he will do from what he says to us.

Ludibras:
Here he is. We must remember everything that he says.

Ichtharion:
Watch his eyes.
[Enter the Prophet, his eyes concealed by his cloak.]
Ichtharion and Ludibras:
The gods are good.

Voice-of-the-Gods:
They are benignant.

Ichtharion:
I am much to blame. I am very much to blame.

Ludibras:
We trust that the King will relent.

Ichtharion:
He often relents at sunset; he looks out over the orchids in the evening. They are very beautiful then, and if he is angry his anger passes away just when the cool breeze comes at the set of sun.

Ludibras:
He is sure to relent at sunset.

Ichtharion:
Do not be angry. I am indeed to blame. Do not be angry.
Voice-of-the-Gods:
I do not wish the King to relent at sunset.

Ichtharion:
Do not be unhappy.
Voice-of-the-Gods:
I say to you that I have betrayed the gods.

Ichtharion:
Listen to me. Do not be so unhappy. There are no gods. Everybody knows that there are no gods. The King knows it.
Voice-of-the-Gods:
You have heard their prophet lie and believe that the gods are dead?

Ludibras:
There are indeed no gods. It is well known.
Voice-of-the-Gods:
There are gods, and they have a vengeance even for you. Listen and I will

tell you what it shall be. Aye and for you also… Listen!… No, no, they are silent in the gloom of the hills. They have not spoken to me since I lied.

Ichtharion:
You are right; the gods will punish us. It is natural that they should not speak just now; but they will certainly punish us. It is not therefore necessary for any man to avenge himself upon us, even though there were any cause.
Voice-of-the-Gods:
It is not necessary.

Ichtharion:
Indeed, it might even further anger the gods if a man should be before them to punish us.
Voice-of-the-Gods:
The gods are very swift; no man outruns them.

Ludibras:
A man would be rash to attempt to.
Voice-of-the-Gods:
The sun is falling low. I will leave you now, for I have ever loved the sun at evening. I go to watch it drop through the gilded clouds, and make a wonder of familiar things. After the sunset, night, and after an evil deed, the vengeance of the gods. *[Exit R.]*

Ludibras: *[with contemptuous wonder]*
He really believes in the gods.

Ichtharion:
He is as mad as the Queen; we must humour his madness if we ever see him more. I think that all will be well.
[An executioner steals after the Prophet; he is dressed in crimson satin to the knees; he wears a leather belt and carries the axe of his trade.]

Ludibras:
His voice was angry as he went away. I fear he may yet betray us.

Ichtharion:
It is not likely. He thinks that the gods will punish us.

Ludibras:
How long will he think so? The Queen's fancies change thrice an hour.

Ichtharion:
The executioner keeps very close to him now. He comes closer every hour. There is not much time for him to change his fancies.

Ludibras:
He has the will to betray us if that fancy leaves him.

Ichtharion:
The executioner is very eager for him. He invented a new stroke lately, but he has not had a man since we came to Thek.

Ludibras:
I do not like an eager executioner — the King sees him and it makes him think…

Ichtharion:
Look how low the sun is; he has no time to betray us. The King is not yet here.

Ludibras:
He is coming.

Ichtharion:
But the prophet is not here.

Ludibras:
No, he is not yet come.
[Enter the King.]

King Karnos:
The Queen's maidens have persuaded her that there is nothing to fear. They are quite excellent; they shall dance before me. The Queen will

sleep; they are quite excellent. Ah, Ichtharion. Come to me, Ichtharion.

Ludibras:
Why does the King send for you?

King Karnos:
You were wrong, Ichtharion.

Ichtharion:
Your Majesty!
[Ludibras watches.]

King Karnos:
You were wrong to think that Thek is not very lovely.

Ichtharion:
Yes, I was wrong and I am much to blame.

King Karnos:
Yes, it is very beautiful at evening. I will watch them go down over the orchids. I will never see Barbul-el-Sharnak any more. I will sit and watch the sun go down on the orchids till it is gone and all their colours fade.

Ichtharion:
It is very beautiful now. How still it is! I have never seen so still a sunset before.

King Karnos:
It is like a picture done by a dying painter, full of a beautiful colour. Even if all these orchids died to-night yet their beauty is an indestructible memory.

Ludibras: *[Aside to Ichtharion]*
The prophet is coming this way.

Ichtharion:
Your Majesty, the prophet walks about in the palace, and the executioner is close behind him. If the Queen saw him and the executioner would it not

trouble her? Were it not better that he should be killed at once? Shall I whistle for the executioner?

King Karnos:
Not now. I said at sunset.

Ichtharion:
Your Majesty, it is merciful to kill a man before the set of the sun. For it is natural in a man to love the sun. But to see it set and to know that it will not come again is even a second death. It would be merciful to kill him now.

King Karnos:
I have said — at sunset. It were unjust to kill him before his prophecy is proven false.

Ichtharion:
But, your Majesty, we know that it is false. He also knows it.

King Karnos:
He shall die at sunset.

Ludibras:
Your Majesty, the prophet will pray for life if he is not killed now.
It would be pity to grant it.

King Karnos:
Is not a King's word death? I have said he shall die at sunset.
[Enter Prophet. The Executioner creeps along close behind him.]
Voice-of-the-Gods:
O the gods are about to have lied. The gods will have lied. I have prophesied falsely and the gods will have lied. My death cannot atone for it nor the punishment of others.
[Ichtharion and Ludibras start.]

Ichtharion:
He will betray us yet.
Voice-of-the-Gods:

O why did you let your voice come through my lips? O why did you allow your voice to lie? For centuries it has been said from city to city, “The gods cannot lie.” The nomads have known it out upon the plains. The mountaineers have known it near the dawn. That is all over now. O King, let me die at once. For I have prophesied falsely and at sunset the gods will lie.

King Karnos:
It is not sunset yet. No doubt you have spoken truly.
[Enter Queen.]
How well the Queen looks. Her maidens are quite excellent.

Ludibras: *[To Ichtharion]*
There is something a little dreadful in seeing the Queen so calm. She is like a windless sunset in the Winter before a hurricane comes and the snow swirls up before it over the world.

Ichtharion:
I do not like calm sunsets; they make me think that something is going to happen. Yes, the Queen is very quiet; she will sleep to-night.

Queen:
I am not frightened any longer. All the wild fancies of my brain have left it. I have often troubled you with little fears. Now they are all at rest and I am afraid no longer.

King Karnos:
That is good; I am very glad. You will sleep tonight.

Queen:
Sleep. Why — yes, I shall sleep. O yes, we shall all sleep.

King Karnos:
Your maidens have told you that there is nothing to fear.

Queen:
Nothing to fear? No, no more little fears to trouble me.

King Karnos:
They have told you there is nothing at all to fear. Indeed there is nothing.

Queen:
No more little fears. There is one great fear.

King Karnos:
A great fear! Why, what is it?

Queen:
I must not say. For you have often soothed me when I was frightened, and it were not well for me to trouble you at the last.

King Karnos:
What is your fear? Shall I send again for your maidens?

Queen:
No, it is not my fear. It is all men's fear if they knew.

King Karnos: *[glancing round]*
Ah, you have seen my man in red. I will send him away. I will ——

Queen:
No, no. My fear is not earthly. I am not afraid of little things any more.

King Karnos:
Why, what is it then?

Queen:
I do not quite know. But you know how I have ever feared the gods. The gods are going to do some dreadful thing.

King Karnos:
Believe me; the gods do nothing nowadays.

Queen:
You have indeed been very good to me. It seems a little while since the camels came to Argun-Zeerith by the iris marshes, the camels with the gold-

hung palanquin, and the bells above their heads, high up in the air, the silver bridal bells. It seems a very little while ago. I did not know how swift the end would come.

King Karnos:
What end? To whom is the end coming?

Queen:
Do not be troubled. We should not let Fate trouble us. The World and its daily cares, ah, they are frightful: but Fate — I smile at Fate. Fate cannot hurt us if we smile at it.

King Karnos:
What end do you say is coming?

Queen:
I do not know. Something that has been shall soon be no more.

King Karnos:
No, no. Look upon Thek. It is built of rock and our palace is all of marble. Time has not scratched it with six centuries. Six tearing centuries with all their claws. We are throned on gold and founded upon marble. Death will some day find me, indeed, but I am young. Sire after sire of mine has died in Barbul-el-Sharnak or in Thek, but has left our dynasty laughing sheer in the face of Time from over these age-old walls.

Queen:
Say farewell to me now, lest something happen.

King Karnos:
No, no, we will not say unhappy things.

Executioner:
The sun has set.

King Karnos:
Not yet. The jungle hides it. It is not yet set. Look at the beautiful light upon the orchids. For how long they have flashed their purple on the gleaming

walls of Thek. For how long they will flash there on our immortal palace, immortal in marble and immortal in song. Ah, how the colour changes.
[To the Executioner]
The sun is set. Take him away.
[To the Queen]
It is *he* whose end you foresaw.
[The Executioner grips the Prophet by the arm.]
Voice-of-the-Gods:
The gods have lied!

King Karnos:
The jungle is sinking! It has fallen into the earth!
[The Queen smiles a little, holding his hand.]
The city is falling in! The houses are rolling towards us!
[Thunder off.]

Ichtharion:
They are coming up like a wave and darkness is coming with them.
[Loud and prolonged thunder. Flashes of red light and then total darkness. A little light comes back, showing recumbent figures, shattered pillars and rocks of white marble.]
[The Prophet's back is broken, but he raises the fore-part of his body for a moment.]
Voice-of-the-Gods: *[triumphantly]*
They have not lied!

Ichtharion:
O, I am killed.
[Laughter heard off.]
Someone is laughing. Laughing even in Thek! Why, the whole city is shattered.
[The laughter grows demoniac.]
What is that dreadful sound?

Voice-of-the-Gods:
It is the laughter of the gods that cannot lie, going back to their hills.

[He dies.]
[Curtain]

The Queen’s Enemies

Dramatis Personæ

The Queen
Ackazárpses (her handmaid)
Prince Rhádamandáspes
Prince Zophérnes
The Priest of Horus
The King of the Four Countries
The Twin Dukes of Ethiopia
Tharni, Tharrabas, Harlee (Slaves)
Slaves.

Scene: An underground temple in Egypt.

Time: The Sixth Dynasty.

The Queen's Enemies

[The Curtain rises on darkness in both parts of the stage. Two Slaves appear with tapers on the steps. As they go down the steps, they light the torches that are clamped against the wall, with their tapers. Afterwards when they come to the temple they light the torches there till they are all lit. The two Slaves are Tharni and Tharrabas.]

Tharrabas:
Is it much further, Tharni?

Tharni:
I think not, Tharrabas.

Tharrabas:
A dank and terrible place.

Tharni:
It is not much further.

Tharrabas:
Why does the Queen banquet in so fearful a place?

Tharni:
I know not. She banquets with her enemies.

Tharrabas:
In the land from which I was taken we do not banquet with our enemies.

Tharni:
No? The Queen will banquet with her enemies.

Tharrabas:
Why? Know you why?

Tharni:
It is the way of the Queen.
[Silence.]

Tharrabas:
The door, Tharni, we have come to the door!

Tharni:
Yes, that's the Temple.

Tharrabas:
Surely a grim place.

Tharni:
The banquet is prepared. We light these torches, that is all.

Tharrabas:
Unto whom is it holy?

Tharni:
They say to the Nile once. I know not to whom it is holy now.

Tharrabas:
So Nile has left it?

Tharni:
They say they worship him in this place no longer.

Tharrabas:
And if I were holy Nile I also would stay up there *[pointing]* in the sunlight.
[He suddenly sees the huge misshapen bulk of Harlee.]
Oh-h-h!

Harlee:
Urh

Tharni:
Why, it's Harlee.

Tharrabas:
I thought you were some fearful, evil god.
[Harlee laughs. He remains leaning on his great iron bar.]

Tharni:
He waits here for the Queen.

Tharrabas:
What sinister need could she have of Harlee?

Tharni:
I know not. You wait for the Queen, Harlee?
[Harlee nods.]

Tharrabas:
I would not banquet here. Not with a Queen.
[Harlee laughs long.]

Tharrabas:
Our work is done. Come. Let us leave this place.
[Exeunt Tharrabas and Tharni up the steps.]
[The Queen appears with her handmaid, Ackazárpses, coming down the steps. Her handmaid holds her train. They enter the temple.]

Queen:
Ah. All is ready.

Ackazárpses:
No, no, Illustrious Lady. Nothing is ready. Your raiment — we must fasten it here *[shoulder]*, and then the bow in your hair.
[She begins to titivate the Queen.]

Queen:
Ackazárpses, Ackazárpses, I cannot *bear* to have enemies.

Ackazárpses:
Indeed, Illustrious Lady, it is wrong that you should have enemies. One so delicate, so slender and withal so beautiful should never have a foe.

Queen:
If the gods could understand they would never permit it.

Ackazárpses:
I have poured out dark wine to them, I have offered them fat, indeed, I have often offered them savoury things. I have said: The Queen should not have enemies; she is too delicate, too fair. But they will not understand.

Queen:
If they could see my tears they would never permit such woes to be borne by one small woman. But they only look at men and their horrible wars. Why must men slay one another and make horrible war?

Ackazárpses:
I blame your enemies, Illustrious Lady, more than the gods. Why should they trouble you who are so fair and so easily hurt by their anger? It was but a little territory you took from them. How much better to lose a little territory than to be unmannerly and unkind.

Queen:
O speak not of the territory. I know naught of these things. They say my Captains took it. How should I know? O why will they be my enemies?

Ackazárpses:
You are most fair to-night, Illustrious Lady.

Queen:
I must needs be fair to-night.

Ackazárpses:
Indeed you are most fair.

Queen:
A little more perfume, Ackazárpses.

Ackazárpses:
I will tie the coloured bow more evenly.

Queen:
O they will never look at it. They will not know if it is orange or blue. I shall weep if they do not look at it. It is a pretty bow.

Ackazárpses:
Calm yourself, lady! They will be here soon.

Queen:
Indeed I think they are very close to me now, for I feel myself trembling.

Ackazárpses:
You must not tremble, Illustrious Lady; you must not tremble.

Queen:
They are such terrible men, Ackazárpses.

Ackazárpses:
But you must not tremble, for your raiment is now perfect; yet if you tremble, alas! who may say how it will hang?

Queen:
They are such huge, terrible men.

Ackazárpses:
O the raiment, the raiment; you must not, you must not!

Queen:
O I cannot bear it. I cannot bear it. There is Rhádamandáspes, that huge, fierce soldier, and the terrible Priest of Horus, and… and… O I cannot see them, I cannot see them.

Ackazárpses:
Lady, you have invited them.

Queen:
O say I am ill, say I am sick of a fever.
Quick, quick, say I have some swift fever and cannot see them.

Ackazárpses:
Illustrious Lady ——

Queen:
Quick, for I cannot bear it.
[Exit Ackazárpses.]

Queen:
O, I cannot bear to have enemies.

Ackazárpses:
Lady, they are here.

Queen:
O what shall we do?… Set this bow higher upon my head so that it must be seen. *[Ackazárpses does so.]* The pretty bow.
[She continues to look in a hand mirror. A Slave descends the stairs. Then Rhádamandáspes and Zophérnes. Rhádamandáspes and Zophérnes stop; the Slave stops lower down.]

Zophérnes:
For the last time, Rhádamandáspes, consider. Even yet we may turn back.

Rhádamandáspes:
She had no guards outside nor was there any hiding place for them.
There was the empty plain and the Nile only.

Zophérnes:
Who knows what she may have in this dark temple?

Rhádamandáspes:
It is small and the stairway narrow; our friends are close behind us.
We could hold these steps with our swords against all her men.

Zophérnes:
True. They are narrow steps. Yet… Rhádamandáspes, I do not fear man or god or even woman, yet when I saw the letter this woman sent bidding us banquet with her I felt that it was not well that we should come.

Rhádamandáspes:
She said that she would love us though we were her enemies.

Zophérnes:
It is not natural to love one's enemies.

Rhádamandáspes:
She is much swayed by whims. They sway her as the winds in spring sway flowers — this way and that. This is one of her whims.

Zophérnes:
I do not trust her whims.

Rhádamandáspes:
They name you Zophérnes, giver of good counsel, therefore I will turn back because you counsel it, though I would fain go down and banquet with this little playful lady.
[They turn and mount.]

Zophérnes:
Believe me, Rhádamandáspes, it is better. I think that if you had gone down these steps we scarcely should have seen the sky again.

Rhádamandáspes:
Well, well, we turn back, though I would fain have humoured the Queen's whim. But look. The others come. We cannot turn back. There comes the Priest of Horus; we must go to the banquet now.

Zophérnes:
So be it.
[They descend.]

Rhádamandáspes:
We will be circumspect. If she has men in there we return at once.

Zophérnes:
So be it.
[The Slave opens the door.]

Slave:
The Princes Rhádamandáspes and Zophérnes.

Queen:
Welcome, Illustrious Princes.

Rhádamandáspes:
Greeting.

Queen:
O you have brought your sword!

Rhádamandáspes:
I have brought my sword.

Queen:
O but it is so terrible, your great sword.

Zophérnes:
We always carry our swords.

Queen:
O but you do not need them. If you have come to kill me your great hands are enough. But why do you bring your swords?

Rhádamandáspes:
Illustrious Lady, we do not come to kill you.

Queen:
To your post, Harlee.

Zophérnes:
What are this Harlee and his post?

Ackazárpses:
Do not tremble, Illustrious Lady, indeed you must not tremble.

Queen:
He is but a fisherman; he lives upon the Nile. He nets fish; indeed he is nothing.

Zophérnes:
For what is your great bar of iron, Slave?
[Harlee opens his mouth showing that he is tongueless. Exit.]

Rhádamandáspes:
Ugh! They have burned out his tongue.

Zophérnes:
He goes on secret errands.
[Enter Second Slave.]

Second Slave:
The Priest of Horus.

Queen:
Welcome, holy companion of the gods.
Priest of Horus:
Greeting.

Third Slave:
The King of the Four Countries.
[She and he make obeisance.]

Fourth Slave:
The Twin Dukes of Ethiopia.
King of the Four Countries:
We are all met.
Priest of Horus:
All that have warred against her Captains.

Queen:
O speak not of my Captains. It troubles me to hear of violent men. But you have been my enemies, and I cannot bear to have enemies. Therefore I have asked you to banquet with me.
Priest of Horus:
And we have come.

Queen:
O look not so sternly at me. I cannot bear to have enemies. When I have enemies I do not sleep. Is it not so, Ackazárpses?

Ackazárpses:
Indeed, the Illustrious Lady has suffered much.

Queen:
O Ackazárpses, why should I have enemies?

Ackazárpses:
After to-night you will sleep, Illustrious Lady.

Queen:
Why, yes, for we shall all be friends; shall we not, princes? Let us be seated.

Rhádamandáspes:
[To Zophérnes.] There is no other doorway. That is well.

Zophérnes:
Why, no, there is not. Yet what is that great hole that is full of darkness?

Rhádamandáspes:
Only one man at a time could come that way. We are safe from man or beast. Nothing could enter that way for our swords.

Queen:
I pray you be seated.
[They seat themselves cautiously, she standing watching them.]

Zophérnes:
There are no servitors.

Queen:
Are there not viands before you, Prince Zophérnes, or are there too few fruits that you should blame me?

Zophérnes:
I do not blame you.

Queen:
I fear you blame me with your fierce eyes.

Zophérnes:
I do not blame you.

Queen:
O my enemies, I would have you kind to me. And indeed there are no servitors, for I know what evil things you think of me ——
A Duke of Ethiopia:
No, Queen, indeed we think no evil of you.

Queen:
Ah, but you think terrible things.
Priest of Horus:
We think no evil of you, Illustrious Lady.

Queen:
I feared that if I had servitors you would think… you would say, "This wicked Queen, our enemy, will bid them attack us while we feast."
[First Duke of Ethiopia furtively hands food to his Slave standing behind him, who tastes it.]
Though you do not know how I dread the sight of blood, and indeed I would never bid them do such a thing. The sight of blood is shocking.
Priest of Horus:
We trust you, Illustrious Lady.
[He does the same with his Slave.]

Queen:
And for miles around this temple and all along this river I have said, "Let there be no man." I have commanded and there are not. Will you not trust me now?
[Zophérnes does the same and all the guests, one by one.]

Priest of Horus:
Indeed, we trust you.

Queen:
And you, Prince Zophérnes, with your fierce eyes that so frighten me, will you not trust me?

Zophérnes:
O Queen, it is part of the art of war to be well prepared when in an enemy's country, and we have been so long at war with your Captains that we perforce remember some of the art. It is not that we do not trust you.

Queen:
I am all alone with my handmaid and none will trust me! O Ackazárpses, I am frightened: what if my enemies should slay me and carry me up, and cast my body into the lonely Nile.

Ackazárpses:
No, no, Illustrious Lady. They will not harm you. They do not know how their fierce looks distress you. They do not know how delicate you are.
Priest of Horus: *[to Ackazárpses]*
Indeed we trust the Queen and none would harm her.
[Ackazárpses soothes the Queen.]

Rhádamandáspes: *[to Zophérnes]*
I think we do wrong to doubt her, seeing she is alone.

Zophérnes: *[to Rhádamandáspes]*
Yet I would that the banquet were over.

Queen: *[to Ackazárpses and the Priest of Horus, but audible to all]*
Yet they do not eat the food that I set before them.
Duke of Ethiopia:
In Ethiopia when we feast with queens it is our custom not to eat at once but to await the Queen till she has eaten.

Queen: *[Eats.]*
Behold then, I have eaten.
[She looks at the Priest of Horus.]
Priest of Horus:
It has been the custom of all that held my office, from the time when there went on earth the children of the Moon, never to eat till the food is dedicate, by our sacred signs, to the gods. *[He begins to wave his hands over the food.]*

Queen:
The King of the Four Countries does not eat. And you, Prince Rhádamandáspes, you have given royal wine unto your slave.

Rhádamandáspes:
O Queen, it is the custom of our dynasty… and has indeed long been so,… as many say,… that the noble should not feast till the base have feasted, reminding us that our bodies even as the humble bodies of the base ——

Queen:
Why do you thus watch your slave, Prince Rhádamandáspes?

Rhádamandáspes:
Even to remind myself that I have done as our dynasty doth.

Queen:
Alas for me, Ackazárpses, they will not feast with me, but mock me because I am little and alone. O I shall not sleep to-night, I shall not sleep. *[She weeps.]*

Ackazárpses:
Yes, yes, Illustrious Lady, you shall sleep. Be patient and all shall be well and you will sleep.

Rhádamandáspes:
But Queen, Queen, we are about to eat.
Duke of Ethiopia:
Yes, yes, indeed we do not mock you.

King of Four Countries:
We do not mock you, Queen.
Priest of Horus:
They do not mean to mock you.

Queen:
They… give my food to slaves.
Priest of Horus:
That was a mistake.

Queen:
It was… no mistake.
Priest of Horus:
The slaves were hungry.

Queen: *[still weeping]*
They believe I would poison them.
Priest of Horus:
No, no, Illustrious Lady, they do not believe *that*.

Queen:
They believe I would poison them.

Ackazárpses: *[comforting her]*
O hush, hush. They do not mean to be so cruel.
Priest of Horus:
They do not believe you would poison them. But they do not know if the meat was killed with a poisonous arrow or if an asp may have inadvertently bitten the fruit. These things may happen, but they do not believe you would poison them.

Queen:
They believe I would poison them.

Rhádamandáspes:
No; Queen, see, we eat.
[They hastily whisper to slaves.]

1st Duke of Ethiopia:
We eat your viands, Queen.

2nd Duke of Ethiopia:
We drink your wine.
King of Four Countries:
We eat your good pomegranates and Egyptian grapes.

Zophérnes:
We eat.
[They all eat.]
Priest of Horus: *[smiling affably]*
I *too* eat of your excellent banquet, O Queen.
[He peels a fruit slowly, glancing constantly at the others. Meanwhile the catches in the Queen's breath grow fewer, she begins to dry her eyes.]

Ackazárpses: *[in her ear]*
They eat.
[Ackazárpses lifts her head and watches them.]

Queen:
Perhaps the wine is poisoned.
Priest of Horus:
No, no, Illustrious Lady.

Queen:
Perhaps the grape was cut by a poisoned arrow.
Priest of Horus:
But indeed… indeed…
[Queen drinks from his cup.]

Queen:
Will you not drink my wine?
Priest of Horus:
I drink to our continued friendship.
[He drinks.]
A Duke of Ethiopia:

Our continued friendship!
Priest of Horus:
There has been no true enmity. We misunderstood the Queen's armies.

Rhádamandáspes: *[to Zophérnes]*
We have wronged the Queen. The wine's not poisoned. Let us drink to her.

Zophérnes:
So be it.

Rhádamandáspes:
We drink to you, Queen.

Zophérnes:
We drink.

Queen:
The flagon, Ackazárpses.
[Ackazárpses brings it. The Queen pours it into her cup.]
Fill up your goblets from the flagon, princes. *[She drinks.]*

Rhádamandáspes:
We wronged you, Queen. It is a blessed wine.

Queen:
It is an ancient wine and grew in Lesbos, looking from Mytelene to the South. Ships brought it overseas and up this river to gladden the hearts of man in holy Egypt. But to me it brings no joy.
Duke of Ethiopia:
It is a happy wine, Queen.

Queen:
I have been thought a poisoner.
Priest of Horus:
Indeed, none has thought that, Illustrious Lady.

Queen:
You have all thought it.

Rhádamandáspes:
We ask your pardon, Queen.
King of Four Countries:
We ask your pardon.
Duke of Ethiopia:
Indeed we erred.

Zophérnes: *[rising]*
We have eaten your fruits and drunk your wine; and we have asked your pardon. Let us now depart in amity.

Queen:
No, no! No, no! You must not go! I shall say… "They are my enemies still," and I shall not sleep. I that cannot bear to have enemies.

Zophérnes:
Let us depart in all amity.

Queen:
O will you not feast with me?

Zophérnes:
We have feasted.

Rhádamandáspes:
No, no, Zophérnes. Do you not see? The Queen takes it to heart.
[Zophérnes sits down.]

Queen:
O feast with me a little longer and make merry, and be my enemies no more. Rhádamandáspes, there is some country eastwards towards Assyria, is there not? I do not know its name — a country which your dynasty claims of me…

Zophérnes:
Ha!

Rhádamandáspes: *[resignedly]*
We have lost it.

Queen:
…and for whose sake you are my enemy and your fierce uncle, Prince Zophérnes.

Rhádamandáspes:
We fought somewhat with your armies, Queen. But indeed it was but to practise the military art.

Queen:
I will call my Captains to me. I will call them down from their high places and reprove them and bid them give the country back to you that lies eastwards towards Assyria. Only you shall tarry here at the feast and forget you ever were my enemies… forget…

Rhádamandáspes:
Queen…! Queen…! It was my mother's country as a child.

Queen:
You will not leave me alone then here to-night.

Rhádamandáspes:
No, most royal lady.

Queen: *[to King of Four Countries who appears about to depart]*
And in the matter of the merchant men that trade amongst the isles, they shall offer spices at *your* feet, not at mine, and the men of the isles shall offer goats to *your* gods.
King of Four Countries:
Most generous Queen… indeed…

Queen:
But you will not leave my banquet and go unfriendly away.

King of Four Countries:
No, Queen… *[He drinks.]*

Queen: *[she looks at the Twin Dukes amiably]*
All Ethiopia shall be yours, down to the unknown kingdoms of the beasts.

1st Duke of Ethiopia:
Queen.

2nd Duke of Ethiopia:
Queen. We drink to the glory of your throne.

Queen:
Stay then and feast with me. For not to have enemies is the beggar's joy; and I have looked from windows long and long, envying those that go their way in rags. Stay with me, dukes and princes.
Priest of Horus:
Illustrious Lady, the generosity of your royal heart has given the gods much joy.

Queen: *[smiles at him.]*
Thank you.
Priest of Horus:
Er… in the matter of the tribute due to Horus from all the people of Egypt…

Queen:
It is yours.
Priest of Horus:
Illustrious Lady.

Queen:
I will take none of it. Use it how you will.
Priest of Horus:
The gratitude of Horus shall shine on you. My little Ackazárpses, how happy you are in having so royal a mistress.
[His arm is round Ackazárpses' waist: she smiles at him.]

Queen: *[rising]*
Princes and gentlemen, let us drink to the future.
Priest of Horus: *[starting suddenly]*
Ah-h-h!

Queen:
Something has troubled you, holy companion of the gods?
Priest of Horus:
No, nothing. Sometimes the spirit of prophecy comes on me. It comes not often. It seemed to come then. I thought that one of the gods spoke to me clearly.

Queen:
What said he?
Priest of Horus:
I thought he said… speaking here *[right ear]* or just behind me…
Drink not to the Future. But it was nothing.

Queen:
Will you drink then to the past?
Priest of Horus:
O no, Illustrious Lady, for we forget the past; your good wine has made us forget the past and its quarrels.

Ackazárpses:
Will you not drink to the present?
Priest of Horus:
Ah, the present! The present that places me by so lovely a lady. I drink to the present.

Queen: *[to the others]*
And we, we will drink to the future, and to forgetting — to the forgetting of our enemies.
[All drink; good temper comes on all. The banquet begins "to go well."]

Queen:
Ackazárpses, they are all merry now.

Ackazárpses:
They are all merry.

Queen:
They are telling Ethiopian tales.

1st Duke of Ethiopia:
…for when Winter comes the pigmies at once put themselves in readiness for war and having chosen a place for battle wait there for some days, so that the cranes when they arrive find their enemy already arrayed. And at first they preen themselves and do not give battle, but when they are fully rested after their great journey they attack the pigmies with indescribably fury so that many are slain, but the pigmies…

Queen: *[taking her by the wrist]*
Ackazárpses! Come!
[The Queen rises.]

Zophérnes:
Queen, you do not leave us?

Queen:
For a little while, Prince Zophérnes.

Zophérnes:
For what purpose?

Queen:
I go to pray to a very secret god.

Zophérnes:
What is his name?

Queen:
His name is secret like his deeds.

[She goes to door. Silence falls. All watch her. She and Ackazárpses slip out. For a moment silence. Then all draw their wide swords and lay them before them on the table.]

Zophérnes:
To the door, slaves. Let no man enter.

1st Duke of Ethiopia:
She cannot mean to harm us!
[A Slave comes back from door and abases himself. Loq.]

Slave:
The door is bolted.

Rhádamandáspes:
It is easily broken with our swords.

Zophérnes:
No harm can come to us while we guard the entrances.
[Meanwhile the Queen has gone up the stairs. She beats with a fan on the wall thrice. The great grating lifts outwards and upwards very slowly.]

Zophérnes: *[to the Two Dukes]*
Quick, to the great hole.
Stand on each side of it with your swords.
[They lift their swords over the hole.]
Slay whatever enters.

Queen:
[on the step, kneeling, her two arms stretched upwards]
O holy Nile! Ancient Egyptian river! O blessed Nile!
When I was a little child I played beside you, picking mauve flowers. I threw you down the sweet Egyptian flowers. It is the little Queen that calls to you, Nile. The little Queen that cannot bear to have enemies.
Hear me, O Nile.
Men speak of other rivers. But I do not hearken to fools. There is only Nile.
It is the little child that prays to you who used to pick mauve flowers.

Hear me, O Nile.
I have prepared a sacrifice to god. Men speak of other gods: there is only Nile. I have prepared a sacrifice of wine — the Lesbian wine from fairy Mitylene — to mingle with your waters till you are drunken and go singing to the sea from the Abyssinian hills.
O Nile, hear me.
Fruits also I have made ready, all the sweet juices of the earth; and the meat of beasts also.
Hear me, O Nile: for it is not the meat of beasts only. I have slaves for you and princes and a King. There has been no such sacrifice. Come down, O Nile, from the sunlight. O ancient Egyptian river!
The sacrifice is ready. O Nile, hear me.
Duke of Ethiopia:
No one comes.

Queen: *[beats again with her fan]*
Harlee, Harlee, let in the water upon the princes and gentlemen.
[A green torrent descends from the great hole. Green gauzes rise from the floor; the torches hiss out. The temple is flooded. The water from under the doors rises up the steps, the torches hiss out one by one. The water, finding its own level, just touches the end of the Queen's skirt and stops. She withdraws the skirt with catlike haste from the water.]

Queen:
O Ackazárpses! Are all my enemies gone?

Ackazárpses:
Illustrious Lady, the Nile has taken them all.

Queen: *[with intense devotion]*
That holy river.

Ackazárpses:
Illustrious Lady, will you sleep to-night?

Queen:
Yes. I shall sleep sweetly.

[curtain]

The Tents of the Arabs

Dramatis Personæ

The King
Bel-Narb, Aoob (camel-drivers)
The Chamberlain
Zabra (a notable)
Eznarza (a gypsy of the desert)

Scene: Outside the gate of the city of Thalanna.

Time: Uncertain.

Act I

Bel-Narb:
By evening we shall be in the desert again.

Aoob:
Yes.

Bel-Narb:
Then no more city for us for many weeks.

Aoob:
Ah!

Bel-Narb:
We shall see the lights come out, looking back from the camel-track; that is the last we shall see of it.

Aoob:
We shall be in the desert then.

Bel-Narb:
The old angry desert.

Aoob:
How cunningly the Desert hides his wells. You would say he had an enmity with man. He does not welcome you as the cities do.

Bel-Narb:
He *has* an enmity. I hate the desert.

Aoob:
I think there is nothing in the world so beautiful as cities.

Bel-Narb:
Cities are beautiful things.

Aoob:
I think they are loveliest a little after dawn when night falls off from the houses. They draw it away from them slowly and let it fall like a cloak and stand quite naked in their beauty to shine in some broad river; and the light comes up and kisses them on the forehead. I think they are loveliest then. The voices of men and women begin to arise in the streets, scarce audible, one by one, till a slow loud murmur arises and all the voices are one. I often think the city speaks to me then: she says in that voice of hers, "Aoob, Aoob, who one of these days shall die, I am not earthly, I have been always, I shall not die."

Bel-Narb:
I do not think that cities are loveliest at dawn. We can see dawn in the desert any day. I think they are loveliest just when the sun is set and a dusk steals along the narrower streets, a kind of mystery in which we can see cloaked figures and yet not quite discern whose figures they be. And just when it would be dark, and out in the desert there would be nothing to see but a black horizon and a black sky on top of it, just then the swinging lanterns are lighted up and lights come out in windows one by one and all the colours of the raiments change. Then a woman perhaps will slip from a little door and go away up the street into the night, and a man perhaps will steal by with a dagger for some old quarrel's sake, and Skarmi will light up his house to sell brandy all night long, and men will sit on benches outside his door playing skabash by the glare of a small green lantern, while they light great bubbling pipes and smoke nargroob. O, it is all very good to watch. And I like to think as I smoke and see these things that somewhere, far away, the desert has put up a huge red cloud like a wing so that all the Arabs know that next day the Siroc will blow, the accursed breath of Eblis the father of Satan.

Aoob:
Yes, it is pleasant to think of the Siroc when one is safe in a city, but I do not like to think about it now, for before the day is out we will be taking pilgrims to Mecca, and who ever prophesied or knew by wit what the desert had in store? Going into the desert is like throwing bone after bone to a dog, some he will catch and some of them he will drop. He may catch our bones,

or we may go by and come to gleaming Mecca. O-ho, I would I were a merchant with a little booth in a frequented street to sit all day and barter.

Bel-Narb:
Aye, it is easier to cheat some lord coming to buy silk and ornaments in a city than to cheat death in the desert. Oh, the desert, the desert, I love the beautiful cities and I hate the desert.

Aoob: *[pointing off L]*
Who is that?

Bel-Narb:
What? There by the desert's edge where the camels are?

Aoob:
Yes, who is it?

Bel-Narb:
He is staring across the desert the way that the camels go. They say that the King goes down to the edge of the desert and often stares across it. He stands there for a long time of an evening looking towards Mecca.

Aoob:
Of what use is it to the King to look towards Mecca? He cannot go to Mecca. He cannot go into the desert for one day. Messengers would run after him and cry his name and bring him back to the council-hall or to the chamber of judgments. If they could not find him their heads would be struck off and put high up upon some windy roof: the judges would point at them and say, "They see better there!"

Bel-Narb:
No, the King cannot go away into the desert. If God were to make me King I would go down to the edge of the desert once, and I would shake the sand out of my turban and out of my beard and then I would never look at the desert again. Greedy and parched old parent of thousands of devils! He might cover the wells with sand, and blow with his Siroc, year after year and century after century, and never earn one of my curses — if God made me King.

Aoob:
They say you are like the King.

Bel-Narb:
Yes, I *am* like the King. Because his father disguised himself as a camel-driver and came through our villages. I often say to myself, "God is just. And if I could disguise myself as the King and drive him out to be a camel-driver, that would please God for He is just."

Aoob:
If you did this God would say, "Look at Bel-Narb, whom I made to be a camel-driver and who has forgotten this." And then he would forget you, Bel-Narb.

Bel-Narb:
Who knows what God would say?

Aoob:
Who knows? His ways are wonderful.

Bel-Narb:
I would not do this thing, Aoob. I would not do it. It is only what I say to myself as I smoke, or at night out in the desert. I say to myself, "Bel-Narb is King in Thalanna." And then I say, "Chamberlain, bring Skarmi here with his brandy and his lanterns and boards to play skabash, and let all the town come and drink before the palace and magnify my name."

Pilgrims: *[calling off L.]*
Bel-Narb! Bel-Narb! Child of two dogs. Come and untether your camels. Come and start for holy Mecca.

Bel-Narb:
A curse on the desert.

Aoob:
The camels are rising. The caravan starts for Mecca. Farewell, beautiful city.
[Pilgrims' voices off: "Bel-Narb! Bel-Narb!"]

Bel-Narb:
I come, children of sin.
[Exeunt Bel-Narb and Aoob.]
[The King enters through the great door crowned. He sits upon the step.]

King:
A crown should not be worn upon the head. A sceptre should not be carried in Kings' hands. But a crown should be wrought into a golden chain, and a sceptre driven stake-wise into the ground so that a King may be chained to it by the ankle. Then he would know that he might not stray away into the beautiful desert and might never see the palm trees by the wells. O Thalanna, Thalanna, how I hate this city with its narrow, narrow ways, and evening after evening drunken men playing skabash in the scandalous gambling house of that old scoundrel Skarmi. O that I might marry the child of some unkingly house that generation to generation had never known a city, and that we might ride from here down the long track through the desert, always we two alone till we came to the tents of the Arabs. And the crown — some foolish, greedy man should be given it to his sorrow. And all this may not be, for a King is yet a King.
[Enter Chamberlain through door.]

Chamberlain:
Your Majesty!

King:
Well, my lord Chamberlain, have you *more* work for me to do?

Chamberlain:
Yes, there is much to do.

King:
I had hoped for freedom this evening, for the faces of the camels are towards Mecca, and I would see the caravans move off into the desert where I may not go.

Chamberlain:
There is very much for your Majesty to do. Iktra has revolted.

King:
Where is Iktra?

Chamberlain:
It is a little country tributary to your Majesty, beyond Zebdarlon, up among the hills.

King:
Almost, had it not been for this, almost I had asked you to let me go away among the camel-drivers to golden Mecca. I have done the work of a King now for five years and listened to my councilors, and all the while the desert called to me; he said, “Come to the tents of my children, to the tents of my children!” And all the while I dwelt among these walls.

Chamberlain:
If your majesty left the city now ——

King:
I will not, we must raise an army to punish the men of Iktra.

Chamberlain:
Your Majesty will appoint the commanders by name. A tribe of your Majesty’s fighting men must be summoned from Agrarva and another from Coloono, the jungle city, as well as one from Mirsk. This must be done by warrants sealed by your hand. Your Majesty’s advisers await you in the council-hall.

King:
The sun is very low. Why have the caravans not started yet?

Chamberlain:
I do not know. And then your Majesty ——

King: *[laying his hand on the Chamberlain’s arm]*
Look, look! It is the shadows of the camels moving towards Mecca. How silently they slip over the ground, beautiful shadows. Soon they are out in the desert flat on the golden sands. And then the sun will set and they will be one with night.

Chamberlain:
If your Majesty has time for such things there are the camels themselves.

King:
No, no, I do not wish to watch the camels. They can never take me out to the beautiful desert to be free forever from cities. Here I must stay to do the work of a King. Only my dreams can go, and the shadows of the camels carry them, to find peace by the tents of the Arabs.

Chamberlain:
Will your Majesty now come to the council-hall?

King:
Yes, yes, I come.
[Voices off: "Ho-Yo! Ho-Yay! ...Ho-Yo! Ho-Yay!"]
Now the whole caravan has started. Hark to the drivers of the baggage-camels. They will run behind them for the first ten miles, and tomorrow they will mount them. They will be out of sight of Thalanna then, and the desert will lie all round them with sunlight falling on its golden smiles. And a new look will come into their faces. I am sure that the desert whispers to them by night saying, "Be at peace, my children, at peace, my children."
[Meanwhile the Chamberlain has opened the door for the King and is waiting there bowing, with his hand resolutely on the opened door.]

Chamberlain:
Your Majesty will come to the council-hall?

King:
Yes, I will come. Had it not been for Iktra I might have gone away and lived in the golden desert for a year, and seen holy Mecca.

Chamberlain:
Perhaps your Majesty might have gone had it not been for Iktra.

King:
My curse upon Iktra! *[He goes through the doorway.]*
[As they stand in doorway enter Zabra R.]

Zabra:
Your Majesty.

King:
O-ho. More work for an unhappy King.

Zabra:
Iktra is pacified.

King:
Is pacified?

Zabra:
It happened suddenly. The men of Iktra met with a few of your Majesty's fighting men and an arrow chanced to kill the leader of the revolt, and therefore the mob fled away although they were many, and they have all cried for three hours, "Great is the King!"

King:
I will even yet see Mecca and the dreamed-of tents of the Arabs. I will go down now into the golden sands, I ——

Chamberlain:
Your Majesty ——

King:
In a few years I will return to you.

Chamberlain:
Your Majesty, it cannot be. We could not govern the people for more than a year. They would say, "The King is dead, the King — —"

King:
Then I will return in a year. In one year only.

Chamberlain:
It is a long time, your Majesty.

King:
I will return at noon a year from to-day.

Chamberlain:
But, your Majesty, a princess is being sent for from Tharba.

King:
I thought one was coming from Karshish.

Chamberlain:
It has been thought more advisable that your Majesty should wed in Tharba. The passes across the mountains belong to the King of Tharba and he has great traffic with Sharan and the Isles.

King:
Let it be as you will.

Chamberlain:
But, your Majesty, the ambassadors start this week; the princess will be here in three months' time.

King:
Let her come in a year and a day.

Chamberlain:
Your Majesty!

King:
Farewell, I am in haste. I go to make ready for the desert. *[Exit through door still speaking.]* The olden, golden mother of happy men.

Chamberlain: *[to Zabra]*
One from whom God had not withheld all wisdom would not have given that message to our crazy young King.

Zabra:
But it must be known. Many things might happen if it were not known at once.

Chamberlain:
I knew it this morning. He is off to the desert now.

Zabra:
That is evil indeed; but we can lure him back.

Chamberlain:
Perhaps not for many days.

Zabra:
The King's favour is like gold.

Chamberlain:
It is like much gold. Who are the Arabs that the King's favour should be cast among them? The walls of their houses are canvas. Even the common snail has a finer wall to his house.

Zabra:
O, it is most evil. Alas that I told him this! We shall be poor men.

Chamberlain:
No one will give us gold for many days.

Zabra:
Yet you will govern Thalanna while he is away. You can increase the taxes of the merchants and the tribute of the men that till the fields.

Chamberlain:
They will only pay taxes and tribute to the King, who gives of his bounty to just and upright men when he is in Thalanna. But while he is away the surfeit of his wealth will go to unjust men and to men whose beards are unclean and who fear not God.

Zabra:
We shall indeed be poor.

Chamberlain:
A little gold perhaps from evil-doers for justice. Or a little money to decide

the dispute of some righteous wealthy man; but no more till the King returns, whom God prosper.

Zabra:
God increase him. Will you yet try to detain him?

Chamberlain:
No. When he comes by with his retinue and escort I will walk beside his horse and tell him that a progress through the desert will well impress the Arabs with his splendour and turn their hearts towards him. And I will speak privily to some captain at the rear of the escort and he shall afterwards speak to the chief commander that he may lose the camel-track in a few days' time and take the King and his followers to wander in the desert and so return by chance to Thalanna again. And it may yet be well with us. We will wait here till they come by.

Zabra:
Will the chief commander do this thing certainly?

Chamberlain:
Yes, he will be one Thakbar, a poor man and a righteous.

Zabra:
But if he be not Thakbar but some greedy man who demands more gold than we would give to Thakbar?

Chamberlain:
Why, then we must give him even what he demands, and God will punish his greed.

Zabra:
He must come past us here.

Chamberlain:
Yes, he must come this way. He will summon the cavalry from the Saloia Samang.

Zabra:
It will be nearly dark before they can come.

Chamberlain:
No, he is in great haste. He will pass before sunset. He will make them mount at once.

Zabra: *[looking off R.]*
I do not see stir at the Saloia.

Chamberlain: *[looking, too]* No — no. I do not see. He will *make* a stir.
[As they look a man comes through the doorway wearing a coarse brown cloak which falls over his forehead. Exit furtively L.]
What man is that? He has gone down to the camels.

Zabra:
He has given a piece of money to one of the camel-drivers.

Chamberlain:
See, he has mounted.

Zabra:
Can it have been the King!
[Voice off L. "Ho-Yo! Ho-Yay!"]

Chamberlain:
It is only some camel-driver going into the desert. How glad his voice sounds.

Zabra:
The Siroc will swallow him.

Chamberlain:
What — if it *were* the King!

Zabra:
Why, if it were the King we should starve for a year.
[One year elapses between the first and second acts.]

Act II

[The same scene.]
[The King, wrapped in a camel-driver's cloak, sits by Eznarza, a gypsy of the desert.]

King:
Now I have known the desert and dwelt in the tents of the Arabs.

Eznarza:
There is no land like the desert and like the Arabs no people.

King:
It is all over and done; I return to the walls of my fathers.

Eznarza:
Time cannot put it away; I go back to the desert that nursed me.

King:
Did you think in those days on the sands, or among the tents in the mornings, that my year would ever end, and I be brought away by strength of my word to the prisoning of a palace?

Eznarza:
I knew that Time would do it, for my people have learned the way of him.

King:
Is it then Time that has mocked our futile prayers? Is he then greater than God that he has laughed at our praying?

Eznarza:
We may not say that he is greater than God. Yet we prayed that our own year might not pass away. God could not save it.

King:
Yes, yes. We prayed that prayer. All men would laugh at it.

Eznarza:
The prayer was not laughable. Only he that is lord of the years is obdurate. If a man prayed for life to a furious, merciless Sultan well might the Sultan's slaves laugh. Yet it is not laughable to pray for life.

King:
Yes, we are slaves of Time. To-morrow brings the princess who comes from Tharba. We must bow our heads.

Eznarza:
My people say that Time lives in the desert. He lies there in the sun.

King:
No, no, not in the desert. Nothing alters there.

Eznarza:
My people say that the desert is his country. He smites not his own country, my people say. But he overwhelms all other lands of the world.

King:
Yes, the desert is always the same, even the littlest rocks of it.

Eznarza:
They say that he loves the Sphinx and does not harm her. They say that he does not dare to harm the Sphinx. She has borne him many gods whom the infidels worship.

King:
Their father is more terrible than all the false gods.

Eznarza:
O, that he had but spared our little year.

King:
He destroys all things utterly.

Eznarza:
There is a little child of man that is mightier than he, and who saves the

world from Time.

King:
Who is this little child that is mightier than Time? Is it Love that is mightier?

Eznarza:
No, not Love.

King:
If he conquers even Love then none are mightier.

Eznarza:
He scares Love away with weak white hairs and with wrinkles. Poor little Love, poor Love, Time scares him away.

King:
What is this child of man that can conquer Time and that is braver than Love?

Eznarza:
Even Memory.

King:
Yes. I will call to him when the wind is from the desert and the locusts are beaten against my obdurate walls. I will call to him more when I cannot see the desert and cannot hear the wind of it.

Eznarza:
He shall bring back our year to us that Time cannot destroy. Time cannot slaughter it if Memory says no. It is reprieved, though banished. We shall often see it though a little far off and all its hours and days shall dance to us and go by one by one and come back and dance again.

King:
Why, that is true. They shall come back to us. I had thought that they that work miracles whether in Heaven or Earth were unable to do one thing. I

thought that they could not bring back days again when once they had fallen into the hands of Time.

Eznarza:
It is a trick that Memory can do. He comes up softly in the town or the desert, wherever a few men are, like the strange dark conjurors who sing to snakes, and he does his trick before them, and does it again and again.

King:
We will often make him bring the old days back when you are gone to your people and I am miserably wedded to the princess coming from Tharba.

Eznarza:
They will come with sand on their feet from the golden, beautiful desert; they will come with a long-gone sunset each one over his head. Their lips will laugh with the olden evening voices.

King:
It is nearly noon. It is nearly noon. It is nearly noon.

Eznarza:
Why, we part then.

King:
O, come into the city and be Queen there. I will send its princess back again to Tharba. You shall be Queen in Thalanna.

Eznarza:
I go now back to my people. You will wed the princess from Tharba on the morrow. You have said it. I have said it.

King:
O, that I had not given my word to return.

Eznarza:
A King's word is like a King's crown and a King's sceptre and a King's throne. It is in fact a foolish thing, like a city.

King:
I cannot break my word. But you can be Queen in Thalanna.

Eznarza:
Thalanna will not have a gypsy for a Queen.

King:
I will make Thalanna have her for a Queen.

Eznarza:
You cannot make a gypsy live for a year in a city.

King:
I knew of a gypsy that lived once in a city.

Eznarza:
Not such a gypsy as I… come back to the tents of the Arabs.

King:
I cannot. I gave my word.

Eznarza:
Kings have broken their words.

King:
Not such a King as I.

Eznarza:
We have only that little child of man whose name is Memory.

King:
Come. He shall bring back to us, before we part, one of those days that were banished.

Eznarza:
Let it be the first day. The day we met by the well when the camels came to El-Lolith.

King:
Our year lacked some few days. For my year began here. The camels were some days out.

Eznarza:
You were riding a little wide of the caravan, upon the side of the sunset. Your camel was swinging on with easy strides. But you were tired.

King:
You had come to the well for water. At first I could see your eyes, then the stars came out, and it grew dark and I only saw your shape, and there was a little light about your hair: I do not know if it was the light of the stars, I only knew that it shone.

Eznarza:
And then you spoke to me about the camels.

King:
Then I heard your voice. You did not say the things you would say now.

Eznarza:
Of course I did not.

King:
You did not say things in the same way even.

Eznarza:
How the hours come dancing back!

King:
No, no. Only their shadows. We went together then to Holy Mecca. We dwelt alone in tents in the golden desert. We heard the wild free day sing sings in his freedom, we heard the beautiful night wind. Nothing remains of our year but desolate shadows. Memory whips them and they will not dance.
[Eznarza does not answer.]
We made our farewells where the desert was. The city shall not hear them.

[Eznarza covers her face. The King rises softly and walks up the steps. Enter L. the Chamberlain and Zabra, only noticing each other.]

Chamberlain:
He will come. He will come.

Zabra:
But it is noon now. Our fatness has left us. Our enemies mock at us.
If he do not come God has forgotten us and our friends will pity us!
[Enter Bel-Narb and Aoob.]

Chamberlain:
If he is alive he will come.

Zabra:
I fear that it is past noon.

Chamberlain:
Then he is dead or robbers have waylaid him.
[Chamberlain and Zabra put dust upon their heads.]

Bel-Narb: *[To Aoob.]*
God is just!
[To Chamberlain and Zabra.]
I am the King!
[The King's hand is on the door. When Bel-Narb says this he goes down the steps again and sits beside the gypsy. She raises her head from her hands and looks at him fixedly. He watches Bel-Narb, and the Chamberlain and Zabra. He partially covers his face Arab fashion.]

Chamberlain:
Are you indeed the King?

Bel-Narb:
I am the King.

Chamberlain:
Your Majesty has altered much since a year ago.

Bel-Narb:
Men alter in the desert. And alter much.

Aoob:
Indeed, your Excellency, he is the King. When the King went into the desert disguised I fed his camel. Indeed he is the King.

Zabra:
He is the King. I know the King when I see him.

Chamberlain:
You have seen the King seldom.

Zabra:
I have often seen the King.

Bel-Narb:
Yes, we have often met, often and often.

Chamberlain:
If some one could recognize your Majesty, some one besides this man who came with you, then we should all be certain.

Bel-Narb:
There is no need of it. I am the King.
[The King rises and stretches out his hand palm downwards.]

King:
In holy Mecca, in green-roofed Mecca of the many gates, we knew him for the King.

Bel-Narb:
Yes, that is true. I saw this man in Mecca.

Chamberlain: *[Bowing low.]*
Pardon, your Majesty. The desert had altered you.

Zabra:
I knew your Majesty.

Aoob:
As well as I do.

Bel-Narb: *[Pointing to the King.]*
Let this man be rewarded suitably. Give him some post in the palace.

Chamberlain:
Yes, your Majesty.

King:
I am a camel-driver and we go back to our camels.

Chamberlain:
As you wish.
[Exeunt Bel-Narb, Aoob, Chamberlain and Zabra through door.]

Eznarza:
You have done wisely, wisely, and the reward of wisdom is happiness.

King:
They have their king now. But we will turn again to the tents of the Arabs.

Eznarza:
They are foolish people.

King:
They have found a foolish King.

Eznarza:
It is a foolish man that would choose to dwell among walls.

King:
Some are born kings, but this man has chosen to be one.

Eznarza:
Come, let us leave them.

King:
We will go back again.

Eznarza:
Come back to the tents of my people.

King:
We will dwell a little apart in a dear brown tent of our own.

Eznarza:
We shall hear the sand again, whispering low to the dawn wind.

King:
We shall hear the nomads stirring in their camps far off because it is dawn.

Eznarza:
The jackals will patter past us slipping back to the hills.

King:
When at evening the sun is set we shall weep for no day that is gone.

Eznarza:
I will raise up my head of a night time against the sky, and the old, old, unbought stars shall twinkle through my hair, and we shall not envy any of the diademmed queens of the world.

CURTAIN

A Night at an Inn

Dramatis Personæ

A. E. Scott-Fortescue (the Toff, dilapidated gentleman) William Jones (Bill) Albert Thomas Jacob Smith (Sniggers) (All Merchant Sailors.) 1st Priest of Klesh 2nd Priest of Klesh 3rd Priest of Klesh Klesh

A Night at an Inn

[The Curtain rises on a room in an inn.]
[Sniggers and Bill are talking. The Toff is reading a paper. Albert sits a little apart.]

Sniggers:
What's his idea, I wonder?

Bill:
I don't know.

Sniggers:
And how much longer will he keep us here?

Bill:
We've been here three days.

Sniggers:
And 'aven't seen a soul.

Bill:
And a pretty penny it cost us when he rented the pub.

Sniggers:
'Ow long did 'e rent the pub for?

Bill:
You never know with him.

Sniggers:
It's lonely enough.

Bill:
'Ow long did you rent the pub for, Toffy?
[The Toff continues to read a sporting paper; he takes no notice of what is said.]

Sniggers:
‘E’s *such* a toff.

Bill:
Yet ‘e’s clever, no mistake.

Sniggers:
Those clever ones are the beggars to make a muddle. Their plans are clever enough, but they don’t work, and then they make a mess of things much worse than you or me.

Bill:
Ah

Sniggers:
I don’t like this place.

Bill:
Why not?

Sniggers:
I don’t like the looks of it.

Bill:
He’s keeping us here because those niggers can’t find us. The three heathen priests what was looking for us so. But we want to go and sell our ruby soon.

Albert:
There’s no sense in it.

Bill:
Why not, Albert?

Albert:
Because I gave those black devils the slip in Hull.

Bill:
You give ’em the slip, Albert?

Albert:
The slip, all three of them. The fellows with the gold spots on their foreheads. I had the ruby then, and I give them the slip in Hull.

Bill:
How did you do it, Albert?

Albert:
I had the ruby and they were following me….

Bill:
Who told them you had the ruby? You didn’t show it?

Albert:
No…. But they kind of know.

Sniggers:
They kind of know, Albert?

Albert:
Yes, they know if you’ve got it. Well, they sort of mouched after me, and I tells a policeman and he says, O they were only three poor niggers and they wouldn’t hurt me. Ugh! When I thought of what they did in Malta to poor old Jim.

Bill:
Yes, and to George in Bombay before we started.

Sniggers:
Ugh!

Bill:
Why didn’t you give ’em in charge?

Albert:
What about the ruby, Bill?

Bill:
Ah!

Albert:
Well, I did better than that. I walks up and down through Hull. I walks slow enough. And then I turns a corner and I runs. I never sees a corner but I turns it. But sometimes I let a corner pass just to fool them. I twists about like a hare. Then I sits down and waits. No priests.

Sniggers:
What?

Albert:
No heathen black devils with gold spots on their face. I give ’em the slip.

Bill:
Well done, Albert.

Sniggers: *[after a sigh of content]*
Why didn’t you tell us?

Albert:
‘Cause ’e won’t let you speak. ‘E’s got ’is plans and ’e thinks we’re silly folk. Things must be done ’is way. And all the time I’ve give ’em the slip. Might ‘ave ‘ad one of them crooked knives in him before now but for me who give ’em the slip in Hull.

Bill:
Well done, Albert.

Sniggers:
Do you hear that, Toffy? Albert has give ’em the slip.

The Toff:
Yes, I hear.

Sniggers:
Well, what do you say to that?

The Toff:
O… Well done, Albert.

Albert:
And what a' you going to do?

The Toff:
Going to wait.

Albert:
Don't seem to know what 'e's waiting for.

Sniggers:
It's a nasty place.

Albert:
It's getting silly, Bill. Our money's gone and we want to sell the ruby. Let's get on to a town.

Bill:
But 'e won't come.

Albert:
Then we'll leave him.

Sniggers:
We'll be all right if we keep away from Hull.

Albert:
We'll go to London.

Bill:
But 'e must 'ave 'is share.

Sniggers:
All right. Only let's go. *[to the Toff]* We're going, do you hear? Give us the ruby.

The Toff:
Certainly.
[He gives them a ruby from his waistcoat pocket: it is the size of a small hen's egg.]
[He goes on reading his paper.]

Albert:
Come on, Sniggers.
[Exeunt Albert and Sniggers.]

Bill:
Good-bye, old man. We'll give you your fair share, but there's nothing to do here, no girls, no halls, and we must sell the ruby.

The Toff:
I'm not a fool, Bill.

Bill:
No, no, of course not. Of course you ain't, and you've helped us a lot. Good-bye. You'll say good-bye?

The Toff:
Oh, yes. Good-bye.
[Still reads paper. Exit Bill.]
[The Toff puts a revolver on the table beside him and goes on with his paper.]

Sniggers: *[Out of breath.]*
We've come back, Toffy.

The Toff:
So you have.

Albert:
Toffy — How did they get here?

The Toff:
They walked, of course.

Albert:
But it's eighty miles.

Sniggers:
Did you know they were here, Toffy?

The Toff:
Expected them about now.

Albert:
Eighty miles.

Bill:
Toffy, old man — what are we to do?

The Toff:
Ask Albert.

Bill:
If they can do things like this there's no one can save us but you, Toffy — I always knew you were a clever one. We won't be fools any more. We'll obey you, Toffy.

The Toff:
You're brave enough and strong enough. There isn't many that would steal a ruby eye out of an idol's head, and such an idol as that was to look at, and on such a night. You're brave enough, Bill. But you're all three of you fools. Jim would have none of my plans and where's Jim? And George. What did they do to him?

Sniggers:
Don't, Toffy!

The Toff:
Well, then, your strength is no use to you. You want cleverness; or they'll have you the way that they had George and Jim.

All:
Ugh!

The Toff:
Those black priests would follow you round the world in circles, year after year, till they got the idol's eye. And if we died with it they'd follow our grandchildren. That fool thinks he can escape men like that by running round three streets in the town of Hull.

Albert:
God's truth, *you* 'aven't escaped them, because they're *'ere*.

The Toff:
So I supposed.

Albert:
You *supposed*?

The Toff:
Yes, I believe there's no announcement in the Society papers. But I took this country seat especially to receive them. There's plenty of room if you dig; it is pleasantly situated and what is most important it is in a very quiet neighbourhood. So I am at home to them this afternoon.

Bill:
Well, you're a deep one.

The Toff:
And remember you've only my wits between you and death, and don't put your futile plans against those of an educated gentleman.

Albert:
If you're a gentleman, why don't you go about among gentlemen instead of the likes of us?

The Toff:
Because I was too clever for them as I am too clever for you.

Albert:
Too clever for them?

The Toff:
I never lost a game of cards in my life.

Bill:
You never lost a game?

The Toff:
Not when there was money on it.

Bill:
Well, well.

The Toff:
Have a game of poker?

All:
No, thanks.

The Toff:
Then do as you're told.

Bill:
All right, Toffy.

Sniggers:
I saw something just then. Hadn't we better draw the curtains?

The Toff:
No.

Sniggers:
What?

The Toff:
Don’t draw the curtains.

Sniggers:
O all right.

Bill:
But Toffy, they can see us. One doesn’t let the enemy do that. I don’t see why….

The Toff:
No, of course you don’t.

Bill:
O all right, Toffy.
[All begin to pull out revolvers.]

The Toff: *[putting his own away]*
No revolvers, please.

Albert:
Why not?

The Toff:
Because I don’t want any noise at my party. We might get guests that hadn’t been invited. *Knives* are a different matter.
[All draw knives. The Toff signs to them not to draw them yet.
Toffy has already taken back his ruby.]

Bill:
I think they’re coming, Toffy.

The Toff:
Not yet.

Albert:
When will they come?

The Toff:
When I am quite ready to receive them. Not before.

Sniggers:
I should like to get this over.

The Toff:
Should you? Then we'll have them now.

Sniggers:
Now?

The Toff:
Yes. Listen to me. You shall do as you see me do. You will all pretend to go out. I'll show you how. I've got the ruby. When they see me alone they will come for their idol's eye.

Bill:
How can they tell like this which one of us has it?

The Toff:
I confess I don't know, but they seem to.

Sniggers:
What will you do when they come in?

The Toff:
I shall do nothing.

Sniggers:
What?

The Toff:
They will creep up behind me. Then my friends, Sniggers and Bill and Albert, who gave them the slip, will do what they can.

Bill:
All right, Toffy. Trust us.

The Toff:
If you're a little slow you will see enacted the cheerful spectacle that accompanied the demise of Jim.

Sniggers:
Don't, Toffy. We'll be there all right.

The Toff:
Very well. Now watch me.
[He goes past the windows to the inner door R.; he opens it inwards. Then under cover of the open door he slips down on his knee and closes it, remaining on the inside, appearing to have gone out. He signs to the others who understand. Then he appears to re-enter in the same manner.]
Now, I shall sit with my back to the door. You go out one by one so far as our friends can make out. Crouch very low to be on the safe side. They mustn't see you through the window.
[Bill makes his sham exit.]

The Toff:
Remember, no revolvers. The police are, I believe, proverbially inquisitive.
[The other two follow Bill. All three are now crouching inside the door R. The Toff puts the ruby beside him on the table. He lights a cigarette.]
[The door in back opens so slowly that you can hardly say at what moment it began. The Toff picks up his paper.]
[A Native of India wriggles along the floor ever so slowly, seeking cover from chairs. He moves L. where the Toff is. The three sailors are R. Sniggers and Albert lean forward. Bill's arm keeps them back. An armchair had better conceal them from the Indian. The black Priest nears the Toff.]
[Bill watches to see if any more are coming. Then he leaps forward alone (he has taken his boots off) and knifes the Priest.]
[The Priest tries to shout but Bill's left hand is over his mouth.]
[The Toff continues to read his sporting paper. He never looks round.]

Bill: *[sotto voce]*
There's only one, Toffy. What shall we do?

The Toff: *[without turning his head]*
Only one?

Bill:
Yes.

The Toff:
Wait a moment. Let me think.
[Still apparently absorbed in his paper.]
Ah, yes. You go back, Bill. We must attract another guest. Now are you ready?

Bill:
Yes.

The Toff:
All right. You shall now see my demise at my Yorkshire residence. You must receive guests for me.
[He leaps up in full view of the window, flings up both arms and falls on to the floor near the dead Priest.]
Now be ready.
[His eyes close.]
[There is a long pause. Again the door opens, very very slowly. Another Priest creeps in. He has three golden spots upon his forehead. He looks round, then he creeps up to his companion and turns him over and looks inside each of his clenched hands. Then he looks at the recumbent Toff. Then he creeps towards him. Bill slips after him and knifes him like the other with his left hand over his mouth.]

Bill: *[sotto voce]*
We've only got two, Toffy.

The Toff:
Still another.

Bill:
What'll we do?

The Toff: *[sitting up]*
Hum.

Bill:
This is the best way, much.

The Toff:
Out of the question. Never play the same game twice.

Bill:
Why not, Toffy?

The Toff:
Doesn't work if you do.

Bill:
Well?

The Toff:
I have it, Albert. You will now walk into the room. I showed you how to do it.

Albert:
Yes.

The Toff:
Just run over here and have a fight at this window with these two men.

Albert:
But they're ——

The Toff:
Yes, they're dead, my perspicuous Albert. But Bill and I are going to resuscitate them. —— . Come on.
[Bill picks up a body under the arms.]
That's right, Bill. *[Does the same.]* Come and help us, Sniggers ——
[Sniggers comes] Keep low, keep low. Wave their arms about, Sniggers. Don't show yourself. Now, Albert, over you go. Our Albert is slain.

Back you get, Bill. Back, Sniggers. Still, Albert. Mustn't move when he comes. Not a muscle.
[A Face appears at the window and stays for some time. Then the door opens and looking craftily round the third Priest enters. He looks at his companions' bodies and turns round. He suspects something. He takes up one of the knives and with a knife in each hand he puts his back to the wall. He looks to the left and right.]

The Toff:
Come on, Bill.
[The Priest rushes to the door. The Toff knifes the last Priest from behind.]

The Toff:
A good day's work, my friends.

Bill:
Well done, Toffy. Oh, you are a deep one.

Albert:
A deep one if ever there was one.

Sniggers:
There ain't any more, Bill, are there?

The Toff:
No more in the world, my friend.

Bill:
Aye, that's all there are. There were only three in the temple. Three priests and their beastly idol.

Albert:
What is it worth, Toffy? Is it worth a thousand pounds?

The Toff:
It's worth all they've got in the shop. Worth just whatever we like to ask for it.

Albert:
Then we're millionaires, now.

The Toff:
Yes, and what is more important, we no longer have any heirs.

Bill:
We'll have to sell it now.

Albert:
That won't be easy. It's a pity it isn't small and we had half a dozen. Hadn't the idol any other on him?

Bill:
No, he was green jade all over and only had this one eye. He had it in the middle of his forehead, and was a long sight uglier than anything else in the world.

Sniggers:
I'm sure we ought all to be very grateful to Toffy.

Bill:
And indeed we ought.

Albert:
If it hadn't 'ave been for him ——

Bill:
Yes, if it hadn't 'a' been for old Toffy….

Sniggers:
He's a deep one.

The Toff:
Well, you see, I just have a knack of foreseeing things.

Sniggers:
I should think you did.

Bill:
Why, I don't suppose anything happens that our Toff doesn't foresee. Does it, Toffy?

The Toff:
Well, I don't think it does, Bill. I don't think it often does.

Bill:
Life is no more than just a game of cards to our old Toff.

The Toff:
Well, we've taken these fellows' trick.

Sniggers: *[going to the window]*
It wouldn't do for any one to see them.

The Toff:
O nobody will come this way. We're all alone on a moor.

Bill:
Where will we put them?

The Toff:
Bury them in the cellar, but there's no hurry.

Bill:
And what then, Toffy?

The Toff:
Why, then we'll go to London and upset the ruby business. We'll have really come through this job very nicely.

Bill:
I think the first thing we ought to do is give a little supper to old Toffy. We'll bury these fellows to-night.

Albert:
Yes, let's.

Sniggers:
The very thing.

Bill:
And we'll all drink his health.

Albert:
Good old Toffy.

Sniggers:
He ought to have been a general or a premier.
[They get bottles from cupboard, etc.]

The Toff:
Well, we've earned our bit of a supper.
[They sit down.]

Bill: *[Glass in hand.]*
Here's to old Toffy who guessed everything.
Albert and Sniggers:
Good old Toffy.

Bill:
Toffy who saved our lives and made our fortunes.
Albert and Sniggers:
Hear. Hear.

The Toff:
And here's to Bill who saved me twice to-night.

Bill:
Couldn't have done it but for your cleverness, Toffy.

Sniggers:
Hear, hear. Hear, hear.

Albert:
He foresees everything.

Bill:
A speech, Toffy. A speech from our general.

All:
Yes, a speech.

Sniggers:
A speech.

The Toff:
Well, get me some water. This whiskey's too much for my head, and I must keep it clear till our friends are safe in the cellar.

Bill:
Water. Yes, of course. Get him some water, Sniggers.

Sniggers:
We don't use water here. Where shall I get it?

Bill:
Outside in the garden.
[Exit Sniggers.]

Albert:
Here's to fortune. *[They all drink.]*

Bill:
Here's to Albert Thomas, Esquire. *[He drinks.]*

The Toff:
Albert Thomas, Esquire. *[He drinks.]*

Albert:
And William Jones Esquire.

The Toff:
Albert Jones, Esquire. *[The Toff and Albert drink.]*
[Re-enter Sniggers terrified.]

The Toff:
Hullo, here's Jacob Smith Esquire, J.P., alias Sniggers, back again.

Sniggers:
Toffy, I've been thinking about my share in that ruby. I don't want it, Toffy, I don't want it.

The Toff:
Nonsense, Sniggers, nonsense.

Sniggers:
You shall have it, Toffy, you shall have it yourself, only say
Sniggers has no share in this 'ere ruby. Say it, Toffy, say it.

Bill:
Want to turn informer, Sniggers?

Sniggers:
No, no. Only I don't want the ruby, Toffy….

The Toff:
No more nonsense, Sniggers, we're all in together in this, if one hangs we all hang; but they won't outwit me. Besides, it's not a hanging affair, they had their knives.

Sniggers:
Toffy, Toffy, I've always treated you fair, Toffy. I was always one to say, Give Toffy a chance. Take back my share, Toffy.

The Toff:
What's the matter? What are you driving at?

Sniggers:
Take it back, Toffy.

The Toff:
Answer me; what are you up to?

Sniggers:
I don’t want my share any more.

Bill:
Have you seen the police?
[Albert pulls out his knife.]

The Toff:
No, no knives, Albert.

Albert:
What then?

The Toff:
The honest truth in open court, barring the ruby. We were attacked.

Sniggers:
There’s no police.

The Toff:
Well, then, what’s the matter?

Bill:
Out with it.

Sniggers:
I swear to God…

Albert:
Well?

The Toff:
Don’t interrupt.

Sniggers:
I swear I saw something *what I didn’t like.*

The Toff:
What you didn't like?

Sniggers: *[In tears.]*
O Toffy, Toffy, take it back. Take my share. Say you take it.

The Toff:
What has he seen?
[Dead silence only broken by Sniggers' sobs. Then stony steps are heard.]
[Enter a hideous Idol. It is blind and gropes its way. It gropes its way to the ruby and picks it up and screws it into a socket in the forehead.]
[Sniggers still weeps softly; the rest stare in horror. The Idol steps out, not groping. Its steps move off then stops.]

The Toff:
O great heavens!

Albert: *[In a childish, plaintive voice.]*
What is it, Toffy?

Bill:
Albert, it is that obscene idol *[in a whisper]* come from India.

Albert:
It is gone.

Bill:
It has taken its eye.

Sniggers:
We are saved.
Off, a Voice: *[With outlandish accent.]*
Meestaire William Jones, Able Seaman.
[The Toff has never spoken, never moved. He only gazes stupidly in horror.]

Bill:
Albert, Albert, what is this?

[He rises and walks out. One moan is heard. Sniggers goes to window. He falls back sickly.]

Albert: *[In a whisper.]*
What has happened?

Sniggers:
I have seen it. I have seen it. O I have seen it. *[He returns to table.]*

The Toff: *[Laying his hand very gently on Sniggers' arm, speaking softly and winningly.]*
What was it, Sniggers?

Sniggers:
I have seen it.

Albert:
What?

Sniggers:
O.

Voice:
Meestaire Albert Thomas, Able Seaman.

Albert:
Must I go, Toffy? Toffy, must I go?

Sniggers: *[Clutching him.]*
Don't move.

Albert: *[Going.]*
Toffy, Toffy. *[Exit.]*

Voice:
Meestaire Jacob Smith, Able Seaman.

Sniggers:
I can’t go, Toffy. I can’t go. I can’t do it.
[He goes.]

Voice:
Meestaire Arnold Everett Scott-Fortescue, late Esquire, Able Seaman.

The Toff:
I did not foresee it. *[Exit.]*

CURTAIN.

IF



A Play in Four Acts

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ACT I

SCENE 1

A small railway station near London. Time: Ten years ago.

BERT
‘Ow goes it, Bill?

BILL
Goes it? ‘Ow d’yer think it goes?

BERT
I don’t know, Bill. ‘Ow is it?

BILL
Bloody.

BERT
Why? What’s wrong?

BILL
Wrong? Nothing ain’t wrong.

BERT
What’s up then?

BILL
Nothing ain’t right.

BERT
Why, wot’s the worry?

BILL
Wot’s the worry? They don’t give you better wages nor a dog, and then they thinks they can talk at yer and talk at yer, and say wot they likes, like.

BERT
Why? You been on the carpet, Bill?

BILL
Ain’t I! Proper.

BERT
Why, wot about, Bill?

BILL
Wot about? I’ll tell yer. Just coz I let a lidy get into a train. That’s wot about. Said I ought to ‘av stopped ‘er. Thought the train was moving. Thought it was dangerous. Thought I tried to murder ‘er, I suppose.

BERT
Wot? The other day?

BILL
Yes.

BERT
Tuesday?

BILL
Yes.

BERT
Why. The one that dropped her bag?

BILL
Yes. Drops ‘er bag. Writes to the company. They writes back she shouldn’t ‘av got in. She writes back she should. Then they gets on to me. Any more of it and I’ll...

BERT
I wouldn’t, Bill; don’t you.

BILL
I will.

BERT
Don’t you, Bill. You’ve got your family to consider.

BILL
Well, anyway, I won't let any more of them passengers go jumping into trains any more, not when they're moving, I won't. When the train gets in, doors shut. That's the rule. And they'll 'ave to abide by it.

BERT
Well, I wouldn't stop one, not if...

BILL
I don't care. They ain't going to 'ave me on the mat again and talk all that stuff to me. No, if someone 'as to suffer... 'Ere she is.
[Noise of approaching train heard.]

BERT
Ay, that's her.

BILL
And shut goes the door.
[Enter JOHN BEAL.]

BERT
Wait a moment, Bill.

BILL
Not if he's... Not if he was ever so.

JOHN *[preparing to pass]*
Good morning....

BILL
Can't come through. Too late.

JOHN
Too late? Why, the train's only just in.

BILL
Don't care. It's the rule.

JOHN
O, nonsense. *[He carries on.]*

BILL
It's too late. I tell you you can't come.

JOHN
But that's absurd. I want to catch my train.

BILL
It's too late.

BERT
Let him go, Bill.

BILL
I'm blowed if I let him go.

JOHN
I want to catch my train.
[JOHN is stopped by BILL and pushed back by the face. JOHN advances towards BILL looking like fighting. The train has gone.]

BILL
Only doing my duty.
[JOHN stops and reflects at this, deciding it isn't good enough. He shrugs his shoulders, turns round and goes away.]

JOHN
I shouldn't be surprised if I didn't get even with you one of these days, you..... and some way you won't expect.
Curtain

SCENE 2

Yesterday evening.
[Curtain rises on JOHN and MARY in their suburban home.]

JOHN
I say, dear. Don't you think we ought to plant an acacia?

MARY
An acacia, what's that, John?

JOHN
O, it's one of those trees that they have.

MARY
But why, John?

JOHN
Well, you see the house is called The Acacias, and it seems rather silly not to have at least one.

MARY
O, I don't think that matters. Lots of places are called lots of things. Everyone does.

JOHN
Yes, but it might help the postman.

MARY
O, no, it wouldn't, dear. He wouldn't know an acacia if he saw it any more than I should.

JOHN
Quite right, Mary, you're always right. What a clever head you've got!

MARY
Have I, John? We'll plant an acacia if you like. I'll ask about it at the grocer's.

JOHN
You can’t get one there.

MARY
No, but he’s sure to know where it can be got.

JOHN
Where do they grow, Mary?

MARY
I don’t know, John; but I am sure they do, somewhere.

JOHN
Somehow I wish sometimes, I almost wish I could have gone abroad for a week or so to places like where acacias grow naturally.

MARY
O, would you really, John?

JOHN
No, not really. But I just think of it sometimes.

MARY
Where would you have gone?

JOHN
O, I don’t know. The East or some such place. I’ve often heard people speak of it, and somehow it seemed so...

MARY
The East, John? Not the East. I don’t think the East somehow is quite respectable.

JOHN
O well, it’s all right, I never went, and never shall go now. It doesn’t matter.

MARY *[the photographs catching her eye]*
O, John, I meant to tell you. Such a dreadful thing happened.

JOHN
What, Mary?

MARY
Well, Liza was dusting the photographs, and when she came to Jane's she says she hadn't really begun to dust it, only looked at it, and it fell down, and that bit of glass is broken right out of it.

JOHN
Ask her not to look at it so hard another time.

MARY
O, what do you mean, John?

JOHN
Well, that's how she broke it; she said so, and as I know you believe in Liza...

MARY
Well, I can't think she'd tell a lie, John.

JOHN
No, of course not. But she mustn't look so hard another time.

MARY
And it's poor little Jane's photograph. She will feel it so.

JOHN
O, that's all right, we'll get it mended.

MARY
Still, it's a dreadful thing to have happened.

JOHN
We'll get it mended, and if Jane is unhappy about it she can have Alice's frame. Alice is too young to notice it.

MARY
She isn't, John. She'd notice it quick.

JOHN
Well, George, then.

MARY *[looking at photo thoughtfully]*
Well, perhaps George might give up his frame.

JOHN
Yes, tell Liza to change it. Why not make her do it now?

MARY
Not to-day, John. Not on a Sunday. She shall do it to-morrow by the time you get back from the office.

JOHN
All right. It might have been worse.

MARY
It's bad enough. I wish it hadn't happened.

JOHN
It might have been worse. It might have been Aunt Martha.

MARY
I'd sooner it had been her than poor little Jane.

JOHN
If it had been Aunt Martha's photograph she'd have walked in next day and seen it for certain; I know Aunt Martha. Then there'd have been trouble.

MARY
But, John, how could she have known?

JOHN
I don't know, but she would have; it's a kind of devilish sense she has.

MARY
John!

JOHN
What's the matter?

MARY
John! What a dreadful word you used. And on a Sunday too! Really!

JOHN
O, I'm sorry. It slipped out somehow. I'm very sorry.
[Enter LIZA.]

LIZA
There's a gentleman to see you, sir, which isn't, properly speaking, a gentleman at all. Not what I should call one, that is, like.

MARY
Not a gentleman! Good gracious, Liza! Whatever do you mean?

LIZA
He's black.

MARY
Black?

JOHN *[reassuring]*
O... yes, that would be Ali. A queer old customer, Mary; perfectly harmless. Our firm gets hundreds of carpets through him; and then one day...

MARY
But what is he doing here, John?

JOHN
Well, one day he turned up in London; broke, he said; and wanted the firm to give him a little cash. Well, old Briggs was for giving him ten shillings. But I said "here's a man that's helped us in making thousands of pounds. Let's give him fifty."

MARY
Fifty pounds!

JOHN
Yes, it seems a lot; but it seemed only fair. Ten shillings would have been an insult to the old fellow, and he'd have taken it as such. You don't know what he'd have done.

MARY
Well, he doesn't want more?

JOHN
No, I expect he's come to thank me. He seemed pretty keen on getting some cash. Badly broke, you see. Don't know what he was doing in London. Never can tell with these fellows. East is East, and there's an end of it.

MARY
How did he trace you here?

JOHN
O, got the address at the office. Briggs and Cater won't let theirs be known. Not got such a smart little house, I expect.

MARY
I don't like letting people in that you don't know where they come from.

JOHN
O, he comes from the East.

MARY
Yes, I — I know. But the East doesn't seem quite to count, somehow, as the proper sort of place to come from, does it, dear?

JOHN
No.

MARY
It's not like Sydenham or Bromley, some place you can put your finger on.

JOHN
Perhaps just for once, I don't think there's any harm in him.

MARY
Well, just for once. But we can't make a practice of it. And you don't want to be thinking of business on a Sunday, your only day off.

JOHN
O, it isn't business, you know. He only wants to say thank you.

MARY
I hope he won't say it in some queer Eastern way. You don't know what these people....

JOHN
O, no. Show him up, Liza.

LIZA
As you like, mum. *[Exit.]*

MARY
And you gave him fifty pounds?

JOHN
Well, old Briggs agreed to it. So I suppose that's what he got. Cater paid him.

MARY
It seems a lot of money. But I think, as the man is actually coming up the stairs, I'm glad he's got something to be grateful for.
[Enter ALI, shown in by LIZA.]

ALI
Protector of the Just.

JOHN
O, er — yes. Good evening.

ALI
My soul was parched and you bathed it in rivers of gold.

JOHN
O, ah, yes.

ALI
Wherefore the name Briggs, Cater, and Beal shall be magnified and called blessed.

JOHN
Ha, yes. Very good of you.

ALI *[advancing, handing trinket]*
Protector of the Just, my offering.

JOHN
Your offering?

ALI
Hush. It is beyond price. I am not bidden to sell it. I was in my extremity, but I was not bidden to sell it. It is a token of gratitude, a gift, as it came to me.

JOHN
As it came to you?

ALI
Yes, it was given me.

JOHN
I see. Then you had given somebody what you call rivers of gold?

ALI
Not gold; it was in Sahara.

JOHN
O, and what do you give in the Sahara instead of gold?

ALI
Water.

JOHN
I see. You got it for a glass of water, like.

ALI
Even so.

JOHN
And — and what happened?

MARY
I wouldn't take his only crystal, dear. It's a nice little thing, but *[to ALI]*, but you think a lot of it, don't you?

ALI
Even so.

JOHN
But look here, what does it do?

ALI
Much.

JOHN
Well, what?

ALI
He that taketh this crystal, so, in his hand, at night, and wishes, saying "At a certain hour let it be"; the hour comes and he will go back eight, ten, even twelve years if he will, into the past, and do a thing again, or act otherwise than he did. The day passes; the ten years are accomplished once again; he is here once more; but he is what he might have become had he done that one thing otherwise.

MARY
John!

JOHN
I — I don't understand.

ALI
To-night you wish. All to-morrow you live the last ten years; a new way, master, a new way, how you please. To-morrow night you are here, what those years have made you.

JOHN
By Jove!

MARY
Have nothing to do with it, John.

JOHN
All right, Mary, I'm not going to. But, do you mean one could go back ten years?

ALI
Even so.

JOHN
Well, it seems odd, but I'll take your word for it. But look here, you can't live ten years in a day, you know.

ALI
My master has power over time.

MARY
John, don't have anything to do with him.

JOHN
All right, Mary. But who is your master?

ALI
He is carved of one piece of jade, a god in the greenest mountains. The years are his dreams. This crystal is his treasure. Guard it safely, for his power is in this more than in all the peaks of his native hills. See what I give you, master.

JOHN
Well, really, it’s very good of you.

MARY
Good night, Mr. Ali. We are very much obliged for your kind offer, which we are so sorry we can’t avail ourselves of.

JOHN
One moment, Mary. Do you mean that I can go back ten years, and live till — till now again, and only be away a day?

ALI
Start early and you will be here before midnight.

JOHN
Would eight o’clock do!

ALI
You could be back by eleven that evening.

JOHN
I don’t quite see how ten years could go in a single day.

ALI
They will go as dreams go.

JOHN
Even so, it seems rather unusual, doesn’t it?

ALI
Time is the slave of my master

MARY
John!

JOHN
All right, Mary. *[In a lower voice.]* I’m only trying to see what he’ll say.

MARY
All right, John, only...

ALI
Is there no step that you would wish untrodden, nor stride that you would make where once you faltered?

JOHN
I say, why don't you use it yourself?

ALI
I? I am afraid of the past. But you Engleesh, and the great firm of Briggs, Cater, and Beal; you are afraid of nothing.

JOHN
Ha, ha. Well — I wouldn't go quite as far as that, but — well, give me the crystal.

MARY
Don't take it, John! Don't take it.

JOHN
Why, Mary? It won't hurt me.

MARY
If it can do all that — if it can do all that...

JOHN
Well?

MARY
Why, you might never have met me.

JOHN
Never have met you? I never thought of that.

MARY
Leave the past alone, John.

JOHN
All right, Mary. I needn't use it. But I want to hear about it, it's so odd, it's so what-you-might-call queer; I don't think I ever —— *[To ALI.]* You mean if I work hard for ten years, which will only be all to-morrow, I may be Governor of the Bank of England to-morrow night.

ALI
Even so.

MARY
O, don't do it, John.

JOHN
But you said — I'll be back here before midnight to-morrow.

ALI
It is so.

JOHN
But the Governor of the Bank of England would live in the City, and he'd have a much bigger house anyway. He wouldn't live in Lewisham.

ALI
The crystal will bring you to this house when the hour is accomplished, even tomorrow night. If you be the great banker you will perhaps come to chastise one of your slaves who will dwell in this house. If you be head of Briggs and Cater you will come to give an edict to one of your firm. Perchance this street will be yours and you will come to show your power unto it. But you will come.

JOHN
And if the house is not mine?

MARY
John! John! Don't.

ALI
Still you will come.

JOHN
Shall I remember?

ALI
No.

JOHN
If I want to do anything different to what I did, how shall I remember when I get back there?

MARY
Don't. Don't do anything different, John.

JOHN
All right.

ALI
Choose just before the hour of the step you desire to change. Memory lingers a little at first, and fades away slowly.

JOHN
Five minutes?

ALI
Even ten.

JOHN
Then I can change one thing. After that I forget.

ALI
Even so. One thing. And the rest follows.

JOHN
Well, it's very good of you to make me this nice present, I'm sure.

ALI
Sell it not. Give it, as I gave it, if the heart impels. So shall it come back one day to the hills that are brighter than grass, made richer by the gratitude of many men. And my master shall smile thereat and the vale shall be glad.

JOHN
It’s very good of you, I’m sure.

MARY
I don’t like it, John. I don’t like tampering with what’s gone.

ALI
My master’s power is in your hands. Farewell.
[Exit.]

JOHN
I say, he’s gone.

MARY
O, he’s a dreadful man.

JOHN
I never really meant to take it.

MARY
O, John, I wish you hadn’t

JOHN
Why? I’m not going to use it.

MARY
Not going to use it, John?

JOHN
No, no. Not if you don’t want me to.

MARY
O, I’m so glad.

JOHN
And besides, I don’t want things different. I’ve got fond of this little house. And Briggs is a good old sort, you know. Cater’s a bit of an ass, but there’s no harm in him. In fact, I’m contented, Mary. I wouldn’t even change Aunt

Martha now.
[Points at frowning framed photograph centrally hung.]
You remember when she first came and you said "Where shall we hang her?" I said the cellar. You said we couldn't. So she had to go there. But I wouldn't change her now. I suppose there are old watch-dogs like her in every family. I wouldn't change anything.

MARY
O, John, wouldn't you really?

JOHN
No, I'm contented. Grim old soul, I wouldn't even change Aunt Martha.

MARY
I'm glad of that, John. I was frightened. I couldn't bear to tamper with the past. You don't know what it is, it's what's gone. But if it really isn't gone at all, if it can be dug up like that, why you don't know what mightn't happen! I don't mind the future, but if the past can come back like that.... O, don't, don't, John. Don't think of it. It isn't canny. There's the children, John.

JOHN
Yes, yes, that's all right. It's only a little ornament. I won't use it. And I tell you I'm content. *[Happily]* It's no use to me.

MARY
I'm so glad you're content, John. Are you really? Is there nothing that you'd have had different? I sometimes thought you'd rather that Jane had been a boy.

JOHN
Not a bit of it. Well, I may have at the time, but Arthur's good enough for me.

MARY
I'm so glad. And there's nothing you ever regret at all?

JOHN
Nothing. And you? Is there nothing you regret, Mary?

MARY
Me? Oh, no. I still think that sofa would have been better green, but you would have it red.

JOHN
Yes, so I would. No, there's nothing I regret.

MARY
I don't suppose there's many men can say that.

JOHN
No, I don't suppose they can. They're not all married to you. I don't suppose many of them can.
[MARY smiles.]

MARY
I should think that very few could say that they regretted nothing... very few in the whole world.

JOHN
Well, I won't say nothing.

MARY
What is it you regret, John?

JOHN
Well, there is one thing.

MARY
And what is that?

JOHN
One thing has rankled a bit.

MARY
Yes, John?

JOHN
O, it's nothing, it's nothing worth mentioning. But it rankled for years.

MARY
What was it, John?

JOHN
O, it seems silly to mention it. It was nothing.

MARY
But what?

JOHN
O, well, if you want to know, it was once when I missed a train. I don't mind missing a train, but it was the way the porter pushed me out of the way. He pushed me by the face. I couldn't hit back, because, well, you know what lawyers make of it; I might have been ruined. So it just rankled. It was years ago before we married.

MARY
Pushed you by the face. Good gracious!

JOHN
Yes, I'd like to have caught that train in spite of him. I sometimes think of it still. Silly of me, isn't it?

MARY
What a brute of a man.

JOHN
O, I suppose he was doing his silly duty. But it rankled.

MARY
He'd no right to do any such thing! He'd no right to touch you!

JOHN
O, well, never mind.

MARY
I should like to have been there... I'd have...

JOHN
O, well, it can't be helped now; but I'd like to have caught it in sp... *[An idea seizes him.]*

MARY
What is it?

JOHN
Can't be helped, I said. It's the very thing that can be helped.

MARY
Can be helped, John? Whatever do you mean?

JOHN
I mean he'd no right to stop me catching that train. I've got the crystal, and I'll catch it yet!

MARY
O, John, that's what you said you wouldn't do.

JOHN
No. I said I'd do nothing to alter the past. And I won't. I'm too content, Mary. But this can't alter it. This is nothing.

MARY
What were you going to catch the train for, John?

JOHN
For London. I wasn't at the office then. It was a business appointment. There was a man who had promised to get me a job, and I was going up to...

MARY
John, it may alter your whole life!

JOHN
Now do listen, Mary, do listen. He never turned up. I got a letter from him apologising to me before I posted mine to him. It turned out he never meant to help me, mere meaningless affabilities. He never came to London that day at all. I should have taken the next train back. That can't affect the future.

MARY
N-no, John. Still, I don't like it.

JOHN
What difference could it make?

MARY
N-n-no.

JOHN
Think how we met. We met at ARCHIE's wedding. I take it one has to go to one's brother's wedding. It would take a pretty big change to alter that. And. you were her bridesmaid. We were bound to meet. And having once met, well, there you are. If we'd met by chance, in a train, or anything like that, well, then I admit some little change might alter it. But when we met at ARCHIE's wedding and you were her bridesmaid, why, Mary, it's a cert. Besides, I believe in predestination. It was our fate; we couldn't have missed it.

MARY
No, I suppose not; still..

JOHN
Well, what?

MARY
I don't like it.

JOHN
O, Mary, I have so longed to catch that infernal train. Just think of it, annoyed on and off for ten years by the eight-fifteen.

MARY
I'd rather you didn't, John.

JOHN
But why?

MARY
O, John, suppose there's a railway accident? You might be killed, and we should never meet.

JOHN
There wasn't.

MARY
There wasn't, John? What do you mean?

JOHN
There wasn't an accident to the eight-fifteen. It got safely to London just ten years ago.

MARY
Why, nor there was.

JOHN
You see how groundless your fears are. I shall catch that train, and all the rest will happen the same as before. Just think Mary, all those old days again. I wish I could take you with me. But you soon will be. But just think of the old days coming back again. Hampton Court again and Kew, and Richmond Park again with all the May. And that bun you bought, and the corked ginger-beer, and those birds singing and the 'bus past Isleworth. O, Mary, you wouldn't grudge me that?

MARY
Well, well then all right, John.

JOHN
And you will remember there wasn't an accident, won't you?

MARY *[resignedly, sadly]*
O, yes, John. And you won't try to get rich or do anything silly, will you?

JOHN
No, Mary. I only want to catch that train. I'm content with the rest. The same things must happen, and they must lead me the same way, to you, Mary. Good night, now, dear.

MARY
Good night?

JOHN
I shall stay here on the sofa holding the crystal and thinking. Then I'll have a biscuit and start at seven.

MARY
Thinking, John? What about?

JOHN
Getting it clear in my mind what I want to do. That one thing and the rest the same. There must be no mistakes.

MARY *[sadly]*
Good night, John.

JOHN
Have supper ready at eleven.

MARY
Very well, John. *[Exit.]*

JOHN *[on the sofa, after a moment or two]*
I'll catch that infernal train in spite of him.
[He takes the crystal and closes it up in the palm of his left hand.]
I wish to go back ten years, two weeks and a day, at, at — 8.10 a.m. to-morrow; 8.10 a.m. to-morrow, 8.10.
[Re-enter MARY in doorway.]

MARY
John! John! You are sure he did get his fifty pounds?

JOHN
Yes. Didn’t he come to thank me for the money?

MARY
You are sure it wasn’t ten shillings?

JOHN
Cater paid him, I didn’t.

MARY
Are you sure that Cater didn’t give him ten shillings?

JOHN
It’s the sort of silly thing Cater would have done!

MARY
O, John!

JOHN
Hmm.
Curtain

SCENE 3

Scene: As in Act I, Scene 1. Time. Ten years ago.

BERT
‘Ow goes it, Bill?

BILL
Goes it? ‘Ow d’yer think it goes?

BERT
I don’t know, Bill. ‘Ow is it?

BILL
Bloody.

BERT
Why, what’s wrong?

BILL
Wrong? Nothing ain’t wrong.

BERT
What’s up, then?

BILL
Nothing ain’t right.

BERT
Why, wot’s the worry?

BILL
Wot’s the worry? They don’t give you better wages nor a dog, and then they thinks they can talk at yer and talk at yer, and say wot they likes, like.

BERT
Why? You been on the carpet, Bill?

BILL
Ain’t I! Proper.

BERT
Why? Wot about, Bill?

BILL
Wot about? I’ll tell yer. Just coz I let a lidy get into a train. That’s wot about. Said I ought to ‘av stopped ‘er. Thought the train was moving. Thought it was dangerous. Thought I tried to murder ‘er, I suppose.

BERT
Wot? The other day?

BILL
Yes.

BERT?
Tuesday?

BILL
Yes.

BERT
Why? The one that dropped her bag?

BILL
Yes. Drops ‘er bag. Writes to the company. They writes back she shouldn’t ‘av got in. She writes back she should. Then they gets on to me. Any more of it and I’ll...

BERT
I wouldn’t, Bill; don’t you.

BILL
I will.

BERT
Don’t you, Bill. You’ve got your family to consider.

BILL
Well, anyway, I won't let any more of them passengers go jumping into trains any more, not when they're moving, I won't. When the train gets in, doors shut. That's the rule, and they'll have to abide by it.
[Enter JOHN BEAL.]

BILL *[touching his hat]* Good morning, sir.
[JOHN does not answer, but walks to the door between them.]
Carry your bag, sir?

JOHN
Go to hell!
[Exit through door.]

BILL
Ullo.

BERT
Somebody's been getting at 'im.

BILL
Well, I never did. Why, I knows the young feller.

BERT
Pleasant spoken, ain't 'e, as a rule?

BILL
Never knew 'im like this.

BERT
You ain't bin sayin' nothing to 'im, 'ave yer?

BILL
Never in my life.

BERT
Well, I never.

BILL
‘Ad some trouble o’ some kind.

BERT
Must ‘ave.
[Train is heard.]

BILL
Ah, ’ere she is. Well, as I was saying...
Curtain

SCENE 4

In a second-class railway carriage.
Time: Same morning as Scene 1, Act I.
Noise, and a scene drawn past the windows. The scene, showing a momentary glimpse of fair English hills, is almost entirely placards, "GIVE HER BOVRIL," "GIVE HER OXO," alternately, for ever.
Occupants, JOHN BEAL, a girl, a man.
All sit in stoical silence like the two images near Luxor. The man has the window seat, and therefore the right of control over the window.

MIRALDA CLEMENT
Would you mind having the window open?

THE MAN IN THE CORNER *[shrugging his shoulders in a shivery way]*
Er — certainly. *[Meaning he does not mind. He opens the window.]*

MIRALDA CLEMENT
Thank you so much.

MAN IN THE CORNER
Not at all. *[He does not mean to contradict her. Stoical silence again.]*

MIRALDA CLEMENT
Would you mind having it shut now? I think it is rather cold.

MAN IN THE CORNER
Certainly.
[He shuts it. Silence again.]

MIRALDA CLEMENT
I think I'd like the window open again now for a bit. It is rather stuffy, isn't it?

MAN IN THE CORNER
Well, I think it's very cold.

MIRALDA CLEMENT
O, do you? But would you mind opening it for me?

MAN IN THE CORNER
I'd much rather it was shut, if you don't mind.
[She sighs, moves her hands slightly, and her pretty face expresses the resignation of the Christian martyr in the presence of lions. This for the benefit of John.]

JOHN
Allow me, madam.
[He leans across the window's rightful owner, a bigger man than he, and opens his window.

MAN IN THE CORNER shrugs his shoulders and, quite sensibly, turns to his paper.]

MIRALDA
O, thank you so much.

JOHN
Don't mention it.
[Silence again.]

VOICES OF PORTERS *[Off]*
Fan Kar, Fan Kar.
[MAN IN THE CORNER gets out.]

MIRALDA
Could you tell me where this is?

JOHN
Yes. Elephant and Castle.

MIRALDA
Thank you so much. It was kind of you to protect me from that horrid man. He wanted to suffocate me.

JOHN
O, very glad to assist you, I'm sure. Very glad.

MIRALDA
I should have been afraid to have done it in spite of him. It was splendid of you.

JOHN
O, that was nothing.

MIRALDA
O, it was, really.

JOHN
Only too glad to help you in any little way.

MIRALDA
It was so kind of you.

JOHN
O, not at all.
[Silence for a bit.]

MIRALDA
I've nobody to help me.

JOHN
Er, er, haven't you really?

MIRALDA
No, nobody.

JOHN
I'd be very glad to help you in any little way.

MIRALDA
I wonder if you could advise me.

JOHN
I — I'd do my best.

MIRALDA
You see, I have nobody to advise me.

JOHN
No, of course not.

MIRALDA
I live with my aunt, and she doesn't understand. I've no father or mother.

JOHN
O, er, er, really?

MIRALDA
No. And an uncle died and he left me a hundred thousand pounds.

JOHN
Really?

MIRALDA
Yes. He didn't like me. I think he did it out of contrariness as much as anything. He was always like that to me.

JOHN
Was he? Was he really?

MIRALDA
Yes. It was invested at twenty-five per cent. He never liked me. Thought I was too — I don't know what.

JOHN
No.

MIRALDA
That was five years ago, and I've never got a penny of it.

JOHN
Really. But, but that's not right.

MIRALDA *[sadly]*
No.

JOHN
Where's it invested?

MIRALDA
In Al Shaldomir.

JOHN
Where's that?

MIRALDA
I don't quite know. I never was good at geography. I never quite knew where Persia ends.

JOHN
And what kind of an investment was it?

MIRALDA
There's a pass in some mountains that they can get camels over, and a huge toll is levied on everything that goes by; that is the custom of the tribe that lives there, and I believe the toll is regularly collected.

JOHN
And who gets it?

MIRALDA
The chief of the tribe. He is called Ben Hussein. But my uncle lent him all this money, and the toll on the camels was what they call the security. They always carry gold and turquoise, you know.

JOHN
Do they?

MIRALDA
Yes, they get it from the rivers.

JOHN
I see.

MIRALDA
It does seem a shame his not paying, doesn't it?

JOHN
A shame? I should think it is. An awful shame. Why, it's a crying shame. He ought to go to prison.

MIRALDA
Yes, he ought. But you see it's so hard to find him. It isn't as if it was this side of Persia. It's being on the other side that is such a pity. If only it was in a country like, like...

JOHN
I'd soon find him. I'd... Why, a man like that deserves anything.

MIRALDA
It is good of you to say that.

JOHN
Why, I'd... And you say you never got a penny?

MIRALDA
No.

JOHN
Well, that is a shame. I call that a downright shame.

MIRALDA
Now, what ought I to do?

JOHN
Do? Well, now, you know in business there's nothing like being on the spot. When you're on the spot you can — but then, of course, it's so far.

MIRALDA
It is, isn't it?

JOHN
Still, I think you should go if you could. If only I could offer to help you in any way, I would gladly, but of course...

MIRALDA
What would you do?

JOHN
I'd go and find that Hussein fellow; and then...

MIRALDA
Yes?

JOHN
Why, I'd tell him a bit about the law, and make him see that you didn't keep all that money that belonged to someone else.

MIRALDA
Would you really?

JOHN
Nothing would please me better.

MIRALDA
Would you really? Would you go all that way?

JOHN
It's just the sort of thing that I should like, apart from the crying shame. The man ought to be...

MIRALDA
We're getting into Holborn. Would you come and lunch somewhere with me and talk it over?

JOHN
Gladly. I'd be glad to help. I've got to see a man on business first. I've

come up to see him. And then after that, after that there was something I wanted to do after that. I can't think what it was. But something I wanted to do after that. O, heavens, what was it?
[Pause.]

MIRALDA
Can't you think?

JOHN
No. O, well, it can't have been so very important. And yet... Well, where shall we lunch?

MIRALDA
Gratzenheim's.

JOHN
Right. What time?

MIRALDA
One-thirty. Would that suit?

JOHN
Perfectly. I'd like to get a man like Hussein in prison. I'd like... O, I beg your pardon.
[He hurries to open the door. Exit MIRALDA.]
Now what was it I wanted to do afterwards?
[Throws hand to forehead.] O, never mind.
Curtain

ACT II

SCENE

JOHN's tent in Al Shaldomir. There are two heaps of idols, left and right, lying upon the ground inside the tent. DAOUD carries another idol in his arms. JOHN looks at its face.
Six months have elapsed since the scene in the second-class railway carriage.

JOHN BEAL
This god is holy.
[He points to the left heap. DAOUD carries it there and lays it on the heap.]

DAOUD
Yes, great master.

JOHN BEAL
You are in no wise to call me great master. Have not I said so? I am not your master. I am helping you people. I know better than you what you ought to do, because I am English. But that's all. I'm not your master, See?

DAOUD
Yes, great master.

JOHN BEAL
O, go and get some more idols. Hurry.

DAOUD
Great master, I go. *[Exit.]*

JOHN BEAL
I can't make these people out.

DAOUD *[returning]*
I have three gods.

JOHN BEAL *[looking at their faces, pointing to the two smaller idols first]*
These two are holy. This one is unholy.

DAOUD
Yes, great master.

JOHN BEAL
Put them on the heap.
[DAOUD does so, two left, one right.]
Get some more.
[DAOUD salaams. Exit.]
[Looking at right heap.] What a — what a filthy people
[Enter DAOUD with two idols.]

JOHN BEAL *[after scrutiny]*
This god is holy, this is unholy.
[Enter ARCHIE BEAL, wearing a "Bowler" hat.]
Why, ARCHIE, this is splendid of you! You've come! Why, that's splendid! All that way!

ARCHIE BEAL
Yes, I've come. Whatever are you doing?

JOHN BEAL

ARCHIE, it's grand of you to come! I never ought to have asked it of you, only...

ARCHIE BEAL
O, that's all right. But what in the world are you doing?

JOHN BEAL

ARCHIE, it's splendid of you.

ARCHIE BEAL
O, cut it. That's all right. But what's all this?

JOHN BEAL
O, this. Well, well they're the very oddest people here. It's a long story. But I wanted to tell you first how enormously grateful I am to you for coming.

ARCHIE BEAL
O, that's all right. But I want to know what you're doing with all these genuine antiques.

JOHN BEAL
Well, ARCHIE, the fact of it is they're a real odd lot of people here. I've learnt their language, more or less, but I don't think I quite understand them yet. A lot of them are Mahommedans; they worship Mahommed, you know. He's dead. But a lot of them worship these things, and...

ARCHIE BEAL
Well, what have you got 'em all in here for?

JOHN BEAL
Yes, that's just it. I hate interfering with them, but, well, I simply had to. You see there's two sorts of idols here; they offer fruit and rats to some of them; they lay them on their hands or their laps.

ARCHIE BEAL
Why do they offer them rats?

JOHN BEAL
O, I don't know. They don't know either. It's the right thing to do out here, it's been the right thing for hundreds of years; nobody exactly knows why. It's like the bows we have on evening shoes, or anything else. But it's all right.

ARCHIE BEAL
Well, what are you putting them in heaps for?

JOHN BEAL
Because there's the other kind, the ones with wide mouths and rust round them.

ARCHIE BEAL
Rust? Yes, so there is. What do they do?

JOHN BEAL
They offer blood to them, ARCHIE. They pour it down their throats. Sometimes they kill people, sometimes they only bleed them. It depends how much blood the idol wants.

ARCHIE BEAL
How much blood it wants? Good Lord! How do they know?

JOHN BEAL
The priests tell them. Sometimes they fill them up to their necks — they're all hollow, you know. In spring it's awful.

ARCHIE BEAL
Why are they worse in spring?

JOHN BEAL
I don't know. The priests ask for more blood then. Much more. They say it always was so.

ARCHIE BEAL
And you're stopping it?

JOHN BEAL
Yes, I'm stopping these. One must. I'm letting them worship those. Of course, it's idolatry and all that kind of thing, but I don't like interfering short of actual murder.

ARCHIE BEAL
And they're obeying you?

JOHN BEAL
'M, y-yes. I think so.

ARCHIE BEAL
You must have got a great hold over them.

JOHN BEAL
Well, I don't know about that. It's the pass that counts.

ARCHIE BEAL
The pass?

JOHN BEAL
Yes, that place you came over. It's the only way anyone can get here.

ARCHIE BEAL
Yes, I suppose it is. But how does the pass affect these idols?

JOHN BEAL
It affects everything here. If that pass were closed no living man would ever enter or leave, or even hear of, this country. It's absolutely cut off except for that one pass. Why, ARCHIE, it isn't even on the map.

ARCHIE BEAL
Yes, I know.

JOHN BEAL
Well, whoever owns that pass is everybody. No one else counts.

ARCHIE BEAL
And who does own it?

JOHN BEAL
Well, it's actually owned by a fellow called Hussein, but Miss Clement's uncle, a man called Hinnard, a kind of lonely explorer, seems to have come this way; and I think he understood what this pass is worth. Anyhow, he lent Hussein a big sum of money and got an acknowledgment from Hussein. Old Hinnard must have been a wonderfully shrewd man. For that acknowledgment is no more legal than an I.O.U., and Hussein is simply a brigand.

ARCHIE BEAL
Not very good security.

JOHN BEAL
Well, you're wrong there. Hussein himself respects that piece of parchment he signed. There's the name of some god or other written on it Hussein is

frightened of. Now you see how things are. That pass is as holy as all the gods that there are in Al Shaldomir. Hussein possesses it. But he owes an enormous sum to Miss Miralda Clement, and I am here as her agent; and you've come to help me like a great sportsman.

ARCHIE BEAL
O, never mind that. Well, it all seems pretty simple.

JOHN BEAL
Well, I don't know, ARCHIE. Hussein admits the debt, but...

ARCHIE BEAL
But what?

JOHN BEAL
I don't know what he'll do.

ARCHIE BEAL
Wants watching, does he?

JOHN BEAL
Yes. And meanwhile I feel sort of responsible for all these silly people. Somebody's got to look after them. Daoud!

DAOUD *[off]*
Great master.

JOHN BEAL
Bring in some more gods.

DAOUD
Yes, great master.

JOHN BEAL
I can't get them to stop calling me absurd titles. They're so infernally Oriental.
[Enter DAOUD.]

ARCHIE BEAL
He’s got two big ones this time.

JOHN BEAL *[to ARCHIE]*
You see, there is rust about their mouths. *[To DAOUD]*: They are both unholy.
[He points to R. heap, and DAOUD puts them there. To DAOUD.]
Bring in some more.

DAOUD
Great master, there are no more gods in Al Shaldomir.

JOHN BEAL
It is well.

DAOUD
What orders, great master.

JOHN BEAL
Listen. At night you shall come and take these gods away. These shall be worshipped again in their own place, these you shall cast into the great river and tell no man where you cast them.

DAOUD
Yes, great master.

JOHN BEAL
You will do this, Daoud?

DAOUD
Even so, great master.

JOHN BEAL
I am sorry to make you do it. You are sad that you have to do it. Yet it must be done.

DAOUD
Yes, I am sad, great master.

JOHN BEAL
But why are you sad, Daoud?

DAOUD
Great master, in times you do not know these gods were holy. In times you have not guessed. In old centuries, master, perhaps before the pass. Men have prayed to them, sorrowed before them, given offerings to them. The light of old hearths has shone on them, flames from old battles. The shadow of the mountains has fallen on them, so many times, master, so many times. Dawn and sunset have shone on them, master, like firelight flickering; dawn and sunset, dawn and sunset, flicker, flicker, flicker for century after century. They have sat there watching the dawns like old men by the fire. They are so old, master, so old. And some day dawn and sunset will die away and shine on the world no more, and they would have still sat on in the cold. And now they go... They are our history, master, they are our old times. Though they be bad times they are our times, master; and now they go. I am sad, master, when the old gods go.

JOHN BEAL
But they are bad gods, Daoud.

DAOUD
I am sad when the bad gods go.

JOHN BEAL
They must go, Daoud. See, there is no one watching. Take them now.

DAOUD
Even so, great master.
[He takes up the largest of the gods with rust.]
Come, Aho-oomlah, thou shalt not drink Nideesh.

JOHN BEAL
Was Nideesh to have been sacrificed?

DAOUD
He was to have been drunk by Aho-oomlah.

JOHN BEAL
Nideesh. Who is he?

DAOUD
He is my son.
[Exit with Aho-oomlah. JOHN BEAL almost gasps.]

ARCHIE BEAL *[who has been looking round the tent]*
What has he been saying?

JOHN BEAL
They're — they're a strange people. I can't make them out.

ARCHIE BEAL
Is that the heap that oughtn't to be worshipped?

JOHN BEAL
Yes.

ARCHIE BEAL
Well, do you know, I'm going to chuck this hat there. It doesn't seem to me somehow to be any more right here than those idols would be at home. Odd isn't it? Here goes.
[He throws hat on right heap of idols. JOHN BEAL does not smile.]
Why, what's the matter?

JOHN BEAL
I don't like to see a decent Christian hat among these filthy idols. They've all got rust on their mouths. I don't like to see it, Archie; it's sort of like what they call an omen. I don't like it.

ARCHIE BEAL
Do they keep malaria here?

JOHN BEAL
I don't think so. Why?

ARCHIE BEAL
Then what's the matter, Johnny? Your nerves are bad.

JOHN BEAL
You don't know these people, and I've brought you out here. I feel kind of responsible. If Hussein's lot turn nasty you don't know what he'd do, with all those idols and all.

ARCHIE BEAL
He'll give 'em a drink, you mean.

JOHN BEAL
Don't, ARCHIE. There's no saying. And I feel responsible for you.

ARCHIE BEAL
Well, they can have my hat. It looks silly, somehow. I don't know why. What are we going to do?

JOHN BEAL
Well, now that you've come we can go ahead.

ARCHIE BEAL
Righto. What at?

JOHN BEAL
We've got to see Hussein's accounts, and get everything clear in black and white, and see just what he owes to Miss Miralda Clement.

ARCHIE BEAL
But they don't keep accounts here.

JOHN BEAL
How do you know?

ARCHIE BEAL
Why, of course they don't. One can see that.

JOHN BEAL
But they must.

ARCHIE BEAL
Well, you haven't changed a bit for your six months here.

JOHN BEAL
Haven't changed?

ARCHIE BEAL
No. Just quietly thinking of business. You'll be a great business man, Johnny.

JOHN BEAL
But we must do business; that's what I came here for.

ARCHIE BEAL
You'll never make these people do it.

JOHN BEAL
Well, what do you suggest?

ARCHIE BEAL
Let's have a look at old Hussein.

JOHN BEAL
Yes, that's what I have been waiting for. Daoud!

DAOUD *[off]*
Master. *[Enters.]*

JOHN BEAL
Go to the palace of the Lord of the pass and beat on the outer door. Say that I desire to see him. Pray him to come to my tent.
[DAOUD bows and Exit.]
[To ARCHIE.] I've sent him to the palace to ask Hussein to come.

ARCHIE BEAL
Lives in a palace, does he?

JOHN BEAL
Yes, it's a palace, it's a wonderful place. It's bigger than the Mansion House, much.

ARCHIE BEAL
And you're going to teach him to keep accounts.

JOHN BEAL
Well, I must. I hate doing it. It seems almost like being rude to the Lord Mayor. But there's two things I can't stand — cheating in business is one and murder's another. I've got to interfere. You see, if one happens to know the right from wrong as we do, we've simply got to tell people who don't. But it isn't pleasant. I almost wish I'd never come.

ARCHIE BEAL
Why, it's the greatest sport in the world. It's splendid.

JOHN BEAL
I don't see it that way. To me those idols are just horrid murder. And this man owes money to this girl with no one to look after her, and he's got to pay. But I hate being rude to a man in a place like the Mansion House, even if he is black. Why, good Lord, who am I? It seems such cheek.

ARCHIE BEAL
I say, Johnny, tell me about the lady. Is she pretty?

JOHN BEAL
What, Miss Miralda? Yes.

ARCHIE BEAL
But what I mean is — what's she like?

JOHN BEAL
Oh, I don't know. It's very hard to say. She's, she's tall and she's fair and she's got blue eyes.

ARCHIE BEAL
Yes, but I mean what kind of a person is she? How does she strike you?

JOHN BEAL
Well, she's pretty hard up until she gets this money, and she hasn't got any job that's any good, and no real prospects bar this, and nobody particular by birth, and doesn't know anybody who is, and lives in the least fashionable suburb and can only just afford a second-class fare and...

ARCHIE BEAL
Yes, yes, go on.

JOHN BEAL
And yet somehow she sort of seems like a — like a queen.

ARCHIE BEAL
Lord above us! And what kind of a queen?

JOHN BEAL
O, I don't know. Well, look here, ARCHIE, it's only my impression. I don't know her well yet. It's only my impression. I only tell you in absolute confidence. You won't pass it on to anybody, of course.

ARCHIE BEAL
O, no. Go on.

JOHN BEAL
Well, I don't know, only she seemed more like well, a kind of autocrat, you know, who'd stop at nothing. Well, no, I don't mean that, only...

ARCHIE BEAL
So you're not going to marry her?

JOHN BEAL
Marry her! Good Lord, no. Why, you'd never dare ask her. She's not that sort. I tell you she's a sort of queen. And (Good Lord!) she'd be a queen if it wasn't for Hussein, or something very like one. We can't go marrying queens. Anyhow, not one like her.

ARCHIE BEAL
Why not one like her?

JOHN BEAL
I tell you — she's a — well, a kind of goddess. You couldn't ask her if she loved you. It would be such, such...

ARCHIE BEAL
Such what?

JOHN BEAL
Such infernal cheek.

ARCHIE BEAL
I see. Well, I see you aren't in love with her. But it seems to me you'll be seeing a good deal of her some day if we pull this off. And then, my boy-o, you'll be going and getting in love with her.

JOHN BEAL
I tell you I daren't. I'd as soon propose to the Queen of Sheba.

ARCHIE BEAL
Well, Johnny, I'm going to protect you from her all I can.

JOHN BEAL
Protect me from her? Why?

ARCHIE BEAL
Why, because there's lots of other girls and it seems to me you might be happier with some of them.

JOHN BEAL
But you haven't even seen her.

ARCHIE BEAL
Nor I have. Still, if I'm here to protect you I somehow think I will. And if I'm not ...

JOHN BEAL
Well, and what then?

ARCHIE BEAL
What nonsense I'm talking. Fate does everything. I can't protect you.

JOHN BEAL
Yes, it's nonsense all right, ARCHIE, but...

HUSSEIN *[off]*
I am here.

JOHN BEAL
Be seen.
[HUSSEIN enters. He is not unlike Bluebeard.]

JOHN BEAL *[pointing to ARCHIE]* My brother.
[ARCHIE shakes hands with HUSSEIN. HUSSEIN looks at his hand when it is over in a puzzled way. JOHN BEAL and Hussein then bow to each other.]

HUSSEIN
You desired my presence.

JOHN BEAL
I am honoured.

HUSSEIN
And I.

JOHN BEAL
The white traveller, whom we call Hinnard, lent you one thousand greater gold pieces, which in our money is one hundred thousand pounds, as you acknowledge. *[Hussein nods his head.]* And every year you were to pay him for this two hundred and fifty of your greater gold pieces — as you acknowledge also.

HUSSEIN
Even so.

JOHN BEAL
And this you have not yet had chance to pay, but owe it still.

HUSSEIN
I do.

JOHN BEAL
And now Hinnard is dead.

HUSSEIN
Peace be with him.

JOHN BEAL
His heiress is Miss Miralda Clement, who instructs me to be her agent.
What have you to say?

HUSSEIN
Peace be with Hinnard.

JOHN BEAL
You acknowledge your debt to this lady, Miss Miralda Clement?

HUSSEIN
I know her not.

JOHN BEAL
You will not pay your debt?

HUSSEIN
I will pay.

JOHN BEAL
If you bring the gold to my tent, my brother will take it to Miss Clement.

HUSSEIN
I do not pay to Miss Clement.

JOHN BEAL
To whom do you pay?

HUSSEIN
I pay to Hinnard.

JOHN BEAL
Hinnard is dead.

HUSSEIN
I pay to Hinnard.

JOHN BEAL
How will you pay to Hinnard?

HUSSEIN
If he be buried in the sea...

JOHN BEAL
He is not buried at sea.

HUSSEIN
If he be buried by any river I go to the god of rivers.

JOHN BEAL
He is buried on land near no river.

HUSSEIN
Therefore I will go to a bronze god of earth, very holy, having the soil in his care and the things of earth. I will take unto him the greater pieces of gold due up to the year when the white traveller died, and will melt them in fire at his feet by night on the mountains, saying, “O, Lruru-onn (this is his name) take this by the way of earth to the grave of Hinnard.” And so I shall be free of my debt before all gods.

JOHN BEAL
But not before me. I am English. And we are greater than gods.

ARCHIE BEAL
What’s that, Johnny?

JOHN BEAL
He won’t pay, but I told him we’re English and that they’re greater than all his bronze gods.

ARCHIE BEAL
That's right, Johnny.
[HUSSEIN looks fiercely at ARCHIE. He sees ARCHIE's hat lying before a big idol. He points at the hat and looks in the face of the idol.]

HUSSEIN *[to the idol]* Drink! Drink!
[He bows. Exit.]

ARCHIE BEAL
What's that he's saying?

JOHN BEAL *[meditatively]* O, nothing — nothing.

ARCHIE BEAL
He won't pay, oh?

JOHN BEAL
No, not to Miss Miralda.

ARCHIE BEAL
Who to?

JOHN BEAL
To one of his gods.

ARCHIE BEAL
That won't do.

JOHN BEAL
No.

ARCHIE BEAL
What'll we do?

JOHN BEAL
I don't quite know. It isn't as if we were in England.

ARCHIE BEAL
No, it isn't.

JOHN BEAL
If we were in England...

ARCHIE BEAL
I know; if we were in England you could call a policeman. I tell you what it is, Johnny.

JOHN BEAL
Yes?

ARCHIE BEAL
I tell you what; you want to see more of Miss Clement.

JOHN BEAL
Why?

ARCHIE BEAL
Why, because at the present moment our friend Hussein is a craftier fellow than you, and looks like getting the best of it.

JOHN BEAL
How will seeing more of Miss Miralda help us?

ARCHIE BEAL
Why, because you want to be a bit craftier than Hussein, and I fancy she might make you.

JOHN BEAL
She? How?

ARCHIE BEAL
We're mostly made what we are by some woman or other. We think it's our own cleverness, but we're wrong. As things are you're no match for Hussein, but if you altered...

JOHN BEAL
Why, ARCHIE; where did you get all those ideas from?

ARCHIE BEAL
O, I don't know.

JOHN BEAL
You never used to talk like that.

ARCHIE BEAL
O, well.

JOHN BEAL
You haven't been getting in love, ARCHIE, have you?

ARCHIE BEAL
What are we to do about Hussein?

JOHN BEAL
It's funny your mentioning Miss Miralda. I got a letter from her the same day I got yours.

ARCHIE BEAL
What does she say?

JOHN BEAL
I couldn't make it out.

ARCHIE BEAL
What were her words?

JOHN BEAL
She said she was going into it closer. She underlined closer. What could she mean by that? How could she get closer?

ARCHIE BEAL
Well, the same way as I did.

JOHN BEAL
How do you mean? I don't understand.

ARCHIE BEAL
By coming here.

JOHN BEAL
By coming here? But she can't come here.

ARCHIE BEAL
Why not?

JOHN BEAL
Because it's impossible. Absolutely impossible. Why — good Lord — she couldn't come here. Why, she'd want a chaperon and a house and — and — everything. Good Lord, she couldn't come here. It would be — well it would be impossible — it couldn't be done.

ARCHIE BEAL
O, all right. Then I don't know what she meant.

JOHN BEAL

ARCHIE! You don't really think she'd come here? You don't really think it, do you?

ARCHIE BEAL
Well, it's the sort of thing that that sort of girl might do, but of course I can't say...

JOHN BEAL
Good Lord, ARCHIE! That would be awful.

ARCHIE BEAL
But why?

JOHN BEAL
Why? But what would I do? Where would she go? Where would her

chaperon go? The chaperon would be some elderly lady. Why, it would kill her.

ARCHIE BEAL
Well, if it did you've never met her, so you needn't go into mourning for an elderly lady that you don't know; not yet, anyway.

JOHN BEAL
No, of course not. You're laughing at me, ARCHIE. But for the moment I took you seriously. Of course, she won't come. One can go into a thing closely without doing it absolutely literally. But, good Lord, wouldn't it be an awful situation if she did.

ARCHIE BEAL
O, I don't know.

JOHN BEAL
All alone with me here? No, impossible. And the country isn't civilised.

ARCHIE BEAL.
Women aren't civilised.

JOHN BEAL
Women aren't...? Good Lord, ARCHIE, what an awful remark. What do you mean?

ARCHIE BEAL
We're tame, they're wild. We like all the dull things and the quiet things, they like all the romantic things and the dangerous things.

JOHN BEAL
Why, ARCHIE, it's just the other way about.

ARCHIE BEAL
O, yes; we do all the romantic things, and all the dangerous things. But why?

JOHN BEAL
Why? Because we like them, I suppose. I can't think of any other reason.

ARCHIE BEAL
I hate danger. Don't you?

JOHN BEAL
Er — well, yes, I suppose I do, really.

ARCHIE BEAL
Of course you do. We all do. It's the women that put us up to it. She's putting you up to this. And the more she puts you up to the more likely is Hussein to get it in his fat neck.

JOHN BEAL
But — but you don't mean you'd hurt Hussein? Not — not badly, I mean.

ARCHIE BEAL
We're under her orders, Johnny. See what she says.

JOHN BEAL
You, you don't really think she'll come here?

ARCHIE BEAL
Of course I do, and the best thing too. It's her show; she ought to come.

JOHN BEAL
But, but you don't understand. She's just a young girl, A girl like Miss Miralda couldn't come out here over the pass and down these mountains, she'd never stand it, and as for the chaperon... You've never met Miss Miralda.

ARCHIE BEAL
No, Johnny. But the girl that was able to get you to go from Bromley to this place can look after herself.

JOHN BEAL
I don't see what that's got to do with it. She was in trouble and I had to help

her.

ARCHIE BEAL
Yes, and she'll be in trouble all the way here from Blackheath, and everyone will have to help her.

JOHN BEAL
What beats me is how you can have the very faintest inkling of what she's like without ever having seen her and without my having spoken of her to you for more than a minute.

ARCHIE BEAL
Well, Johnny, you're not a romantic bird, you're not a traveller by nature, barring your one trip to Eastbourne, and it was I that took you there. And contrariwise, as they say in a book you've never read, you're a levelheaded business man and a hardworking respectable stay-at-home. You meet a girl in a train, and the next time I see you you're in a place that isn't marked on the map and telling it what gods it ought to worship and what gods it ought to have agnosticism about. Well, I say some girl.

JOHN BEAL
Well, I must say you make the most extraordinary deductions, but it was awfully good of you to come, and I ought to be grateful; and I am, too, I'm awfully grateful; and I ought to let you talk all the rot you like. Go ahead. You shall say what you like and do what you like. It isn't many brothers that would do what you've done.

ARCHIE BEAL
O, that's nothing. I like this country. I'm glad I came. And if I can help you with Hussein, why all the better.

JOHN BEAL
It's an awful country, Archie, but we've got to see this through.

ARCHIE BEAL
Does she know all about Hussein?

JOHN BEAL
Yes, everything. I've written fully.

OMAR *[Off]*
Al Shaldomir, Al Shaldomir, The nightingales that guard thy ways...

JOHN BEAL [shouting|
O, go away, go away. *[To ARCHIE.]* I said it was an awful country. They sit down outside one's tent and do that kind of thing for no earthly reason.

ARCHIE BEAL
O, I'd let them sing.

JOHN BEAL
O, you can't have people doing that kind of thing.

OMAR *[in doorway]*
Master, I go.

JOHN BEAL
But why do you come?

OMAR
I came to sing a joyous song to you, master.

JOHN BEAL
Why did you want to sing me a joyous song?

OMAR
Because a lady is riding out of the West. *[Exit.]*

JOHN BEAL
A lady out of... Good Lord!

ARCHIE BEAL
She's coming, Johnny.

JOHN BEAL
Coming? Good Lord, no, Archie. He said a lady; there'd be the chaperon too. There'd be two of them if it was Miss Miralda. But he said a lady. One lady. It can't be her. A girl like that alone in Al Shaldomir. Clean off the map. Oh, no, it isn't possible.

ARCHIE BEAL
I wouldn't worry.

JOHN BEAL
Wouldn't worry? But, good Lord, the situation's impossible. People would talk. Don't you see what people would say? And where could they go? Who would look after them? Do try and understand how awful it is. But it isn't. It's impossible. It can't be them. For heaven's sake run out and see if it is; and (good Lord!) I haven't brushed my hair all day, and, and — oh, look at me.
[He rushes to camp mirror. Exit ARCHIE.

JOHN BEAL tidies up desperately.
Enter ARCHIE.]

ARCHIE BEAL
It's what you call THEM.

JOHN BEAL
What I call THEM? Whatever do you mean?

ARCHIE BEAL
Well, it's her. She's just like what you said.

JOHN BEAL
But it can't be. She doesn't ride. She can never have been able to afford a horse.

ARCHIE BEAL
She's on a camel. She'll be here in a moment. *[He goes to door.]* Hurry up with that hair; she's dismounted.

JOHN BEAL
O, Lord! What's the chaperon like?

ARCHIE BEAL
O, she's attending to that herself.

JOHN BEAL
Attending to it herself? What do you mean?

ARCHIE BEAL
I expect she'll attend to most things.
[Enter HAFIZ EL ALCOLAHN in doorway of tent, pulling back flap a little.]

JOHN BEAL
Who are you?

HAFIZ
I show the gracious lady to your tent.
[Enter MIRALDA CLEMENT, throwing a smile to HAFIZ.]

MIRALDA
Hullo, Mr. Beal.

JOHN BEAL
Er — er — how do you do?
[She looks at ARCHIE.]
O, this is my brother — Miss Clement.

MIRANDA and ARCHIE BEAL
How do you do?

MIRALDA
I like this country.

JOHN BEAL
I'm afraid I hardly expected you.

MIRALDA
Didn't you?

JOHN BEAL
No. You see er — it's such a long way. And wasn't it very expensive?

MIRALDA
Well, the captain of the ship was very kind to me.

JOHN BEAL
O! But what did you do when you landed?

MIRALDA
O, there were some Arabs coming this way in a caravan. They were really very good to me too.

JOHN BEAL
But the camel?

MIRALDA
O, there were some people the other side of the mountains. Everybody has been very kind about it. And then there was the man who showed me here. He's called Hafiz el Alcolahn. It's a nice name, don't you think?

JOHN BEAL
But, you know, this country, Miss Clement, I'm half afraid it's hardly — isn't it, Archie? Er — how long did you think of staying?

MIRALDA
O, a week or so.

JOHN BEAL
I don't know what you'll think of Al Shaldomir. I'm afraid you'll find it...

MIRALDA
Oh, I like it. Just that hollow in the mountains, and the one pass, and no record of it anywhere. I like that. I think it's lovely.

JOHN BEAL
You see, I'm afraid — what I mean is I'm afraid the place isn't even on the map!

MIRALDA
O, that's lovely of it.

JOHN BEAL
All decent places are.

MIRALDA
You mean if a place is on the map we've got to behave accordingly. But if not, why...

JOHN BEAL
Hussein won't pay.

MIRALDA
Let's see Hussein.

JOHN BEAL
I'm afraid he's rather, he's rather a savage-looking brigand.

MIRALDA
Never mind.
[ARCHIE is quietly listening and smiling sometimes.]
Enter DAOUD. He goes up to the unholy heap and takes away two large idols, one under each arm. Exit.]
What's that, Mr. Beal?

JOHN BEAL
O, that. I'm afraid it's rather horrible. I told you it was an awful country. They pray to these idols here, and some are all right, though of course it's terribly blasphemous, but that heap, well, I'm afraid, well that heap is very bad indeed.

MIRALDA
What do they do?

JOHN BEAL
They kill people.

MIRALDA
Do they? How?

JOHN BEAL
I'm afraid they pour their blood down those horrible throats.

MIRALDA
Do they? How do you know?

JOHN BEAL
I've seen them do it, and those mouths are all rusty. But it's all right now. It won't happen any more.

MIRALDA
Won't it? Why not?

JOHN BEAL
Well, I...

ARCHIE BEAL
He's stopped them, Miss Clement. They're all going to be thrown into the river.

MIRALDA
Have you?

JOHN BEAL
Well, yes. I had to. So it's all right now. They won't do it any more.

MIRALDA
H'm.

JOHN BEAL
What, what is it? I promise you that's all right. They won't do that any more.

MIRALDA
H’m. I’ve never known anyone that tried to govern a country or anything of that sort, but...

JOHN BEAL
Of course, I’m just doing what I can to put them right.... I’d be very glad of your advice... Of course, I’m only here in your name.

MIRALDA
What I mean is that I’d always thought that the one thing you shouldn’t do, if you don’t mind my saying so...

JOHN BEAL
No, certainly.

MIRALDA
Was to interfere in people’s religious beliefs.

JOHN BEAL
But, but I don’t think you quite understand. The priests knife these people in the throat, boys and girls, and then acolytes lift them up and the blood runs down. I’ve seen them.

MIRALDA
I think it’s best to leave religion to the priests. They understand that kind of thing.
[JOHN BEAL opens his mouth in horror and looks at ARCHIE. ARCHIE returns the glance; there is very nearly a twinkle in ARCHIE’s eyes.]

MIRALDA
Let’s see Hussein.

JOHN BEAL
What do you think, Archie?

ARCHIE BEAL
Poor fellow. We’d better send for him.

MIRALDA
Why do you say “poor fellow”?

ARCHIE BEAL
Oh, because he’s so much in debt. It’s awful to be in debt. I’d sooner almost anything happened to me than to owe a lot of money.

MIRALDA
Your remark didn’t sound very complimentary.

ARCHIE BEAL
O, I only meant that I’d hate to be in debt. And I should hate owing money to you, Because...

MIRALDA
Why?

ARCHIE BEAL
Because I should so awfully want to pay it.

MIRALDA
I see.

ARCHIE BEAL
That’s all I meant.

MIRALDA
Does Hussein awfully want to pay it?

ARCHIE BEAL
Well, no. But he hasn’t seen you yet. He will then, of course.
[Enter DAOUD. He goes to the unholy heap.]

JOHN BEAL
Daoud, for the present these gods must stay. Aho-oomlah’s gone, but the rest must stay for the present.

DAOUD
Even so, great master.

JOHN BEAL
Daoud, go once more to the palace of the Lord of the Pass and beat the outer door. Say that the great lady herself would see him. The great lady, Miss Clement, the white traveller's heiress.

DAOUD
Yes, master.

JOHN BEAL
Hasten.
[Exit DAOUD.]
I have sent him for Hussein.

MIRALDA
I don't know their language.

JOHN BEAL
You will see him, and I'll tell you what he says.

MIRALDA *[to ARCHIE]*
Have you been here long?

ARCHIE BEAL
No. I think he wrote to me by the same mail as he wrote to you (if they have mails here). I came at once.

MIRALDA
So did I; but you weren't on the Empress of Switzerland.

ARCHIE BEAL
No, I came round more by land.

JOHN BEAL
You know, I hardly like bringing Hussein in here to see you. He's such a — he's rather a...

MIRALDA
What's the matter with him?

JOHN BEAL
Well, he's rather of the brigand type, and one doesn't know what he'll do.

MIRALDA
Well, we must see him first and hear what he has to say before we take any steps.

JOHN BEAL
But what do you propose to do?

MIRALDA
Why, if he pays me everything he owes, or gives up the security...

JOHN BEAL
The security is the pass.

MIRALDA
Yes. If he gives up that or pays...

JOHN BEAL
You know he's practically king of the whole country. It seems rather cheek almost my sending for him like this.

MIRALDA
He must come.

JOHN BEAL
But what are you going to do?

MIRALDA
If he gives up the pass...

JOHN BEAL
Why, if he gives up the pass you'd be you'd be a kind of queen of it all.

MIRALDA
Well, if he does that, all right...

JOHN BEAL
But what if he doesn't?

MIRALDA
Why, if he doesn't pay...

HUSSEIN *[off]*
I am here.

JOHN BEAL
Be seen.
[Enter HUSSEIN.]

HUSSEIN
Greeting once more.

JOHN BEAL
Again greeting.... The great lady, Miss Clement, is here.
[HUSSEIN and MIRALDA look at each other.]
You will pay to Miss Clement and not to your god of bronze. On the word of an Englishman, your god of bronze shall not have one gold piece that belongs to the great lady!

HUSSEIN *[looking contemptuous]*
On the word of the Lord of the Pass, I only pay to Hinnard.
[He stands smiling while MIRALDA regards him. Exit.]

ARCHIE BEAL
Well?

JOHN BEAL
He won't pay.

ARCHIE BEAL
What are we to do now?

JOHN BEAL *[to MIRALDA]*
I'm afraid he's rather an ugly customer to introduce you to like that. I'm sorry he came now.

MIRALDA
O, I like him, I think he looks splendid.

ARCHIE BEAL
Well, what are we to do?

JOHN BEAL
Yes.

ARCHIE BEAL
What do you say, Miss Clement?

JOHN BEAL
Yes, what do you feel we ought to do?

MIRALDA
Well, perhaps I ought to leave all that to you.

ARCHIE BEAL
O, no.

JOHN BEAL
No, it's your money. What do you think we really ought to do?

MIRALDA
Well, of course, I think you ought to kill Hussein.
[JOHN BEAL and ARCHIE BEAL look at each other a little startled.]

JOHN BEAL
But wouldn't that — wouldn't that be — murder?

MIRALDA
O, yes, according to the English law.

JOHN BEAL
I see; you mean — you mean we're not — but we are English.

MIRALDA
I mean it wouldn't be murder — by your law, unless you made it so.

JOHN BEAL
By my law?

MIRALDA
Yes, if you can interfere with their religion like this, and none of them say a word, why — you can make any laws you like.

JOHN BEAL
But Hussein is king here; he is Lord of the Pass, and that's everything here. I'm nobody.

MIRALDA
O, if you like to be nobody, of course that's different.

ARCHIE BEAL
I think she means that if Hussein weren't there there'd be only you. Of course, I don't know. I've only just come.

JOHN BEAL
But we can't kill Hussein!
[MIRALDA begins to cry.]

O Lord! Good heavens! Please, Miss Clement! I'm awfully sorry if I've said anything you didn't like. I wouldn't do that for worlds. I'm awfully sorry. It's a beastly country, I know. I'm really sorry you came. I feel it's all my fault. I'm really awfully sorry...

MIRALDA
Never mind. Never mind. I was so helpless, and I asked you to help me. I never ought to have done it. I oughtn't to have spoken to you at all in that train without being introduced; but I was so helpless. And now, and now, I haven't a penny in the world, and, O, I don't know what to do.

ARCHIE BEAL
We'll do anything for you, Miss Clement.

JOHN BEAL
Anything in the wide world. Please, please don't cry. We'll do anything.

MIRALDA
I... I only, I only wanted to — to kill Hussein. But never mind, it doesn't matter now.

JOHN BEAL
We'll do it, Miss Clement, won't we, Archie? Only don't cry. We'll do it. I — I suppose he deserves it, doesn't he?

ARCHIE BEAL
Yes, I suppose he does.

JOHN BEAL
Well, all right, Miss Clement, that's settled. My brother and I will talk it over.

MIRALDA *[still sniping]*
And — and — don't hang him or anything — he looks so fine.... I — I wouldn't like him treated like that. He has such a grand beard. He ought to die fighting.

JOHN BEAL
We'll see what we can do, Miss Clement.

MIRALDA
It is sweet of you. It's really sweet. It's sweet of both of you. I don't know what I d have done without you. I seemed to know it that day the moment I saw you.

JOHN BEAL
O, it's nothing, Miss Clement, nothing at all.

ARCHIE BEAL
That’s all right.

MIRALDA
Well, now I’ll have to look for an hotel.

JOHN BEAL
Yes, that’s the trouble, that really is the trouble. That’s what I’ve been thinking of

MIRALDA
Why, isn’t there...

JOHN BEAL
No, I’m afraid there isn’t. What are we to do, Archie.

ARCHIE BEAL
I — I can’t think. Perhaps Miss Clement would have a scheme.

MIRALDA *[to JOHN BEAL]*
I rely on you, Mr. Beal.

JOHN BEAL
I — I; but what can I... You see, you’re all alone. If you’d anyone with you, you could have...

MIRALDA
I did think of bringing a rather nice aunt. But on the whole I thought it better not to tell anyone.

JOHN BEAL
Not to tell...

MIRALDA
No, on the whole I didn’t.

JOHN BEAL
I say, Archie, what are we to do?

ARCHIE BEAL
Here's Daoud.
[Enter DAOUD.]

JOHN BEAL
The one man I trust in Al Shaldomir!

DAOUD
I have brought two watchers of the doorstep to guard the noble lady.

JOHN BEAL
He says he's brought two watchers of the doorstep to look after Miss Clement.

ARCHIE BEAL
Two chaperons! Splendid! She can go anywhere now.

JOHN BEAL
Well, really, that is better. Yes that will be all right. We can find a room for you now. The trouble was your being alone. I hope you'll like them. *[To DAOUD.]* Tell them to enter here.

DAOUD *[beckoning in the doorway]*
Ho! Enter!

JOHN BEAL
That's all right, ARCHIE, isn't it?

ARCHIE BEAL
Yes, that's all right. A chaperon's a chaperon, black or white.

JOHN BEAL
You won't mind their being black, will you, Miss Clement?

MIRALDA
No, I shan't mind. They can't be worse than white ones.
[Enter BAZZALOL and THOOTHOOBABA two enormous Nubians,

bearing peacock fans and wearing scimitars. All stare at them. They begin to fan slightly.]

DAOUD
The watchers of the doorstep.

JOHN BEAL
Idiot, Daoud! Fools! Dolts! Men may not guard a lady's door.
[BAZZALOL and THOOTHOOBABA smile ingratiatingly.]
We are not men.

BAZZALOL *[bowing]*
Curtain
Six and a half years elapse

THE SONG OF THE IRIS MARSHES

When morn is bright on the mountains olden
Till dawn is lost in the blaze of day,
When morn is bright and the marshes golden,
Where shall the lost lights fade away?
And where, my love, shall we dream to-day?

Dawn is fled to the marshy hollows
Where ghosts of stars in the dimness stray,
And the water is streaked with the flash of swallows
And all through summer the iris sway.
But where, my love, shall we dream to-day?
When night is black in the iris marshes.

ACT III

SCENE 1

Six and a half years later. Al Shaldomir. A room in the palace.

MIRALDA reclines on a heap of cushions, JOHN beside her.
Bazzalol and Thoothoobaba fan them.

OMAR *[declaiming to a zither]*

Al Shaldomir, Al Shaldomir,
The nightingales that guard thy ways
Cease not to give thee, after God
And after Paradise, all praise.
Thou art the theme of all their lays.
Al Shaldomir, Al Shaldomir....

MIRALDA
Go now, Omar.

OMAR
O lady, I depart. *[Exit.]*

MIRALDA *[languidly]*
John, John. I wish you'd marry me.

JOHN
Miralda, you're thinking of those old customs again that we left behind us seven years ago. What's the good of it?

MIRALDA
I had a fancy that I wished you would.

JOHN
What's the good of it? You know you are my beloved. There are none of those clergymen within hundreds of miles. What's the good of it?

MIRALDA
We could find one, John.

JOHN
O, yes, I suppose we could, but...

MIRALDA
Why won't you?

JOHN
I told you why.

MIRALDA
O, yes, that instinct that you must not marry. That's not your reason, John.

JOHN
Yes, it is.

MIRALDA
It's a silly reason. It's a crazy reason. It's no reason at all. There's some other reason.

JOHN
No, there isn't. But I feel that in my bones. I don't know why. You know that I love none else but you. Besides, we're never going back, and it doesn't matter. This isn't Blackheath.

MIRALDA
So I must live as your slave.

JOHN
No, no, Miralda. My dear, you are not my slave. Did not the singer compare our love to the desire of the nightingale for the evening star? All know that you are my queen.

MIRALDA
They do not know at home.

JOHN
Home? Home? How could they know? What have we in common with home? Rows and rows of little houses; and if they hear a nightingale there

they write to the papers. And — and if they saw this they'd think they were drunk. Miralda, don't be absurd. What has set you thinking of home?

MIRALDA
I want to be crowned queen.

JOHN
But I am not a king. I am only Shereef.

MIRALDA
You are all-powerful here, John, you can do what you please, if you wish to. You don't love me at all.

JOHN
Miralda, you know I love you. Didn't I kill Hussein for you?

MIRALDA
Yes, but you don't love me now.

JOHN
And Hussein's people killed ARCHIE. That was for you too. I brought my brother out here to help you. He was engaged to be married, too.

MIRALDA
But you don't love me now.

JOHN
Yes, I do. I love you as the dawn loves the iris marshes. You know the song they sing. (footnote: poem just before Act III)

MIRALDA
Then why won't you marry me?

JOHN
I told you, I told you. I had a dream about the future. I forgot the dream, but I know I was not to marry. I will not wrong the future.

MIRALDA
Don't be crazy.

JOHN
I will have what fancies I please, crazy or sane. Am I not Shereef of Shaldomir? Who dare stop me if I would be mad as Herod?

MIRALDA
I will be crowned queen.

JOHN
It is not my wish.

MIRALDA
I will, I will, I will.

JOHN
Drive me not to anger. If I have you cast into a well and take twenty of the fairest daughters of Al Shaldomir in your place, who can gainsay me?

MIRALDA
I will be crowned queen.

JOHN
O, do not be tiresome.

MIRALDA
Was it not my money that brought you here? Was it not I who said “Kill Hussein”? What power could you have had, had Hussein lived? What would you have been doing now, but for me?

JOHN
I don’t know, Miralda.

MIRALDA
Catching some silly train to the City. Working for some dull firm. Living in some small suburban house. It is I, I, that brought you from all that, and you won’t make me a queen.

JOHN
Is it not enough that you are my beloved? You know there is none other but

you. Is it not enough, Miralda?

MIRALDA
It is not enough. I will be queen.

JOHN
Tchah!... Miralda, I know you are a wonderful woman, the most wonderful in the East; how you ever came to be in the West I don't know, and a train of all places; but, Miralda, you must not have petty whims, they don't become you.

MIRALDA
Is it a petty whim to wish to be a queen?

JOHN
Yes, when it is only the name you want. You are a queen. You have all you wish for. Are you not my beloved? And have I not power here over all men? Could I not close the pass?

MIRALDA
I want to be queen.

JOHN
Oh-h! I will leave you. I have more to do than to sit and hear your whims. When I come back you will have some other whim. Miralda, you have too many whims.
[He rises.]

MIRALDA
Will you be back soon?

JOHN
No.

MIRALDA
When will you come back, John?
[She is reclining, looking fair, fanning slightly.]

JOHN
In half an hour.

MIRALDA
In half an hour?

JOHN
Yes.
[Exit.]

MIRALDA
Half an hour.
[Her fan is laid down. She clutches it with sudden resolve. She goes to the wall, fanning herself slowly. She leans against it. She fans herself now with obvious deliberation. Three times the great fan goes pat against the window, and then again separately three times; and then she puts it against the window once with a smile of ecstasy. She has signalled. She returns to the cushions and reclines with beautiful care, fanning herself softly.
Enter the Vizier, HAFIZ EL ALCOLAHN]

HAFIZ
Lady! You bade me come.

MIRALDA
Did I, Hafiz?

HAFIZ
Lady, your fan.

MIRALDA
Ah, I was fanning myself.

HAFIZ
Seven times, lady.

MIRALDA
Ah, was it? Well, now you're here.

HAFIZ
Lady, O star of these times. O light over lonely marshes. *[He kneels by her and embraces her.]* Is the Shereef gone, lady?

MIRALDA
For half an hour, Hafiz.

HAFIZ
How know you for half an hour?

MIRALDA
He said so.

HAFIZ
He said so? Then is the time to fear, if a man say so.

MIRALDA
I know him.

HAFIZ
In our country who knows any man so much? None.

MIRALDA
He'll be away for half an hour.

HAFIZ *[embracing]*
O, exquisite lily of unattainable mountains.

MIRALDA
Ah, Hafiz, would you do a little thing for me?

HAFIZ
I would do all things, lady, O evening star.

MIRANDA
Would you make me a queen, Hafiz?

HAFIZ
If — if the Shereef were gathered?

MIRALDA
Even so, Hafiz.

HAFIZ
Lady, I would make you queen of all that lies west of the passes.

MIRANDA
You would make me queen?

HAFIZ
Indeed, before all my wives, before all women, over all Shaldomir, named the elect.

MIRALDA
O, well, Hafiz; then you may kiss me. *[HAFIZ does so ad lib.]*
Hafiz, the Shereef has irked me.

HAFIZ
Lady, O singing star, to all men is the hour.

MIRALDA
The appointed hour?

HAFIZ
Even the appointed hour, the last, leading to darkness.

MIRALDA
Is it written, think you, that the Shereef's hour is soon?

HAFIZ
Lady, O dawn's delight, let there be a banquet. Let the great ones of Shaldomir be bidden there.

MIRALDA
There shall be a banquet, Hafiz.

HAFIZ
Soon, O lady. Let it be soon, sole lily of the garden.

MIRALDA
It shall be soon, Hafiz. *[More embraces.]*

HAFIZ
And above all, O lady, bid Daoud, the son of the baker.

MIRALDA
He shall be bidden, Hafiz.

HAFIZ
O lady, it is well.

MIRALDA
Go now, Hafiz.

HAFIZ
Lady, I go *[giving a bag of gold to BAZZALOL]*. Silence. Silence. Silence.

BAZZALOL *[kneeling]*
O, master!

HAFIZ
Let the tomb speak; let the stars cry out; but do you be silent.

BAZZALOL
Aye, master.

HAFIZ *[to THOOTHOOBABA]*
And you. Though this one speak, yet be silent, or dread the shadow of Hafiz el Alcolahn.
[He drops a bag of gold. THOOTHOOBABA goes down and grabs at the gold; his eyes gloat over it.]

THOOTHOOBABA
Master, I speak not. Oh-h-h.
[Exit HAFIZ.

MIRALDA arranges herself on the cushions. She looks idly at each Nubian. The Nubians put each a finger over his lips and go on fanning with one hand.]

MIRALDA
A queen. I shall look sweet as a queen.
[Enter JOHN. She rises to greet him caressingly.
Enter DAOUD.]
Oh, you have brought Daoud with you.

JOHN
Why not?

MIRALDA
You know that I don't like Daoud.

JOHN
I wish to speak with him.
[MIRALDA looks straight at JOHN and moves away in silence. Exit L.]

JOHN
Daoud.

DAOUD
Great master.

JOHN
Daoud, one day in spring, in the cemetery of those called Blessed, beyond the city's gates, you swore to me by the graves of both your parents....

DAOUD
Great master, even so I swore.

JOHN
.... to be true to me always.

DAOUD
There is no Shereef but my master.

JOHN
Daoud, you have kept your word.

DAOUD
I have sought to, master.

JOHN
You have helped me often, Daoud, warned me and helped me often. Through you I knew those currents that run through the deeps of the market, in silence and all men feel them, but a ruler never. You told me of them, and when I knew — then I could look after myself, Daoud. They could do nothing against me then. Well, now I hold this people. I hold them at last, Daoud, and now — well, I can rest a little.

DAOUD
Not in the East, master.

JOHN
Not in the East, Daoud?

DAOUD
No, master.

JOHN
Why? What do you mean?

DAOUD
In Western countries, master, whose tales I have read, in a wonderful book named the "Good Child's History of England," in the West a man hath power over a land, and lo! the power is his and descends to his son's son after him.

JOHN
Well, doesn't it in the East?

DAOUD
Not if he does not watch, master; in the night and the day, and in the

twilight between the day and the night, and in the dawn between the night and the day.

JOHN
I thought you had pretty long dynasties in these parts, and pretty lazy ones.

DAOUD
Master, he that was mightiest of those that were kings in Babylon had a secret door prepared in an inner chamber, which led to a little room, the smallest in the palace, whose back door opened secretly to the river, even to great Euphrates, where a small boat waited all the days of his reign.

JOHN
Did he really now? Well, he was taking no chances. Did he have to use it?

DAOUD
No, master. Such boats are never used. Those that watch like that do not need to seek them, and the others, they would never be able to reach the river in time, even though the boat were there.

JOHN
I shouldn't like to have to live like that. Why, a river runs by the back of this palace. I suppose palaces usually are on rivers. I'm glad I don't have to keep a boat there.

DAOUD
No, master.

JOHN
Well, what is it you are worrying about? Who is it you are afraid of?

DAOUD
Hafiz el Alcolahn.

JOHN
O, Hafiz. I have no fears of Hafiz. Lately I ordered my spies to watch him no longer. Why does he hate me?

DAOUD
Because, most excellent master, you slew Hussein.

JOHN
Slew Hussein? What is that to do with him? May I not slay whom I please?

DAOUD
Even so, master. Even so. But he was Hussein's enemy.

JOHN
His enemy, eh?

DAOUD
For years he had dreamed of the joy of killing Hussein.

JOHN
Well, he should have done it before I came. We don't hang over things and brood over them for years where I come from. If a thing's to be done, it's done.

DAOUD
Even so, master. Hafiz had laid his plans for years. He would have killed him and got his substance; and then, when the hour drew near, you came, and Hussein died, swiftly, not as Hafiz would have had him die; and lo! thou art the lord of the pass, and Hafiz is no more than a beetle that runs about in the dirt.

JOHN
Well, so you fear Hafiz?

DAOUD
Not for himself, master. Nay, I fear not Hafiz. But, master, hast thou seen when the thunder is coming, but no rumble is heard and the sky is scarce yet black, how little winds run in the grass and sigh and die; and the flower beckons a moment with its head; all the world full of whispers, master, all saying nothing; then the lightning, master, and the anger of God; and men say it came without warning? *[Simply.]* I hear those things coming, master.

JOHN
Well?

DAOUD
Master, it is all silent in the market. Once, when the price of turquoises was high, men abused the Shereef. When the merchant men could not sell their pomegranates for silver they abused the Shereef. It is men's way, master, men's way. Now it is all silent in the market. It is like the grasses with the idle winds, that whisper and sigh and die away; like the flowers beckoning to nothing. And so, master, and so....

JOHN
I see, you fear some danger.

DAOUD
I fear it, master.

JOHN
What danger, Daoud?

DAOUD
Master, I know not.

JOHN
From what quarter, Daoud?

DAOUD
O master, O sole Lord of Al Shaldomir, named the elect, from that quarter.

JOHN
That quarter? Why, that is the gracious lady's innermost chamber.

DAOUD
From that quarter, great master, O Lord of the Pass.

JOHN
Daoud, I have cast men into prison for saying less than this. Men have been flogged on the feet for less than this.

DAOUD
Slay me, master, but hear my words.

JOHN
I will not slay you. You are mistaken, Daoud. You have made a great mistake. The thing is absurd. Why, the gracious lady has scarcely seen Hafiz. She knows nothing of the talk of the market. Who could tell her? No one comes here. It is absurd. Only the other day she said to me... But it is absurd, it is absurd, Daoud. Besides, the people would never rebel against me. Do I not govern them well?

DAOUD
Even so, master.

JOHN
Why should they rebel, then?

DAOUD
They think of the old times, master.

JOHN
The old times? Why, their lives weren't safe. The robbers came down from the mountains and robbed the market whenever they had a mind.

DAOUD
Master, men were content in the old times.

JOHN
But were the merchants content?

DAOUD
Those that loved merchandise were content, master. Those that loved it not went into the mountains.

JOHN
But were they content when they were robbed?

DAOUD
They soon recovered their losses, master. Their prices were unjust and they loved usury.

JOHN
And were the people content with unjust prices?

DAOUD
Some were, master, as men have to be in all countries. The others went into the mountains and robbed the merchants.

JOHN
I see.

DAOUD
But now, master, a man robs a merchant and he is cast into prison. Now a man is slain in the market and his son, his own son, master, may not follow after the aggressor and slay him and burn his house. They are ill-content, master. No man robs the merchants, no man slays them, and the merchants' hearts are hardened and they oppress all men.

JOHN
I see. They don't like good government?

DAOUD
They sigh for the old times, master.

JOHN
I see; I see. In spite of all I have done for them, they want their old bad government back again.

DAOUD
It is the old way, master.

JOHN
Yes, yes. And so they would rebel. Well, we must watch. You have warned me once again, Daoud, and I am grateful. But you are wrong, Daoud, about

the gracious lady. You are mistaken. It is impossible. You are mistaken, Daoud. I know it could not be.

DAOUD
I am mistaken, master. Indeed, I am mistaken. Yet, watch. Watch, master.

JOHN
Well, I will watch.

DAOUD
And, master, if ever I come to you bearing oars, then watch no longer, master, but follow me through the banquet chamber and through the room beyond it. Move as the wild deer move when there is danger, without pausing, without wondering, without turning round; for in that hour, master, in that hour....

JOHN
Through the room beyond the banquet chamber, Daoud?

DAOUD
Aye, master, following me.

JOHN
But there is no door beyond, Daoud.

DAOUD
Master, I have prepared a door.

JOHN
A door, Daoud?

DAOUD
A door none wots of, master.

JOHN
Whither does it lead?

DAOUD
To a room that you know not of, a little room; you must stoop, master.

JOHN
O, and then?

DAOUD
To the river, master.

JOHN
The river! But there's no boat there.

DAOUD
Under the golden willow, master.

JOHN
A boat?

DAOUD
Even so, under the branches.

JOHN
Is it come to that?... No, Daoud, all this is unnecessary. It can't come to that.

DAOUD
If ever I come before you bearing two oars, in that hour, master, it is necessary.

JOHN
But you will not come. It will never come to that.

DAOUD
No, master.

JOHN
A wise man can stop things before they get as far as that.

DAOUD
They that were kings in Babylon were wise men, master.

JOHN
Babylon! But that was thousands of years ago.

DAOUD
Man changes not, master.

JOHN
Well, Daoud, I will trust you, and if it ever comes to that...
[Enter MIRALDA.]

MIRALDA
I thought Daoud was gone.

DAOUD
Even now I go, gracious lady.
[Exit DAOUD. Rather strained silence with JOHN and MIRALDA till he goes. She goes and retakes herself comfortable on the cushions. He is not entirely at ease.]

MIRALDA
You had a long talk with Daoud.

JOHN
Yes, he came and talked a good deal.

MIRALDA
What about?

JOHN
O, just talk; you know these Eastern people.

MIRALDA
I thought it was something you were discussing with him.

JOHN
O, no.

MIRALDA
Some important secret.

JOHN
No, not at all.

MIRALDA
You often talk with Daoud.

JOHN
Yes, he is useful to me. When he talks sense I listen, but to-day...

MIRALDA
What did he come for to-day?

JOHN
O, nothing.

MIRALDA
You have a secret with Daoud that you will not share with me.

JOHN
No, I have not.

MIRALDA
What was it he said?

JOHN
He said there was a king in Babylon who...
[DAOUD slips into the room.]

MIRALDA
In Babylon? What has that to do with us?

JOHN
Nothing. I told you he was not talking sense.

MIRALDA
Well, what did he say?

JOHN
He said that in Babylon...

DAOUD
Hist!

JOHN
O, well...
[MIRALDA glares, but calms herself and says nothing.
Exit DAOUD.]

MIRALDA
What did Daoud say of Babylon?

JOHN
O, well, as you say, it had nothing to do with us.

MIRALDA
But I wish to hear it.

JOHN
I forget.
[For a moment there is silence.]

MIRALDA
John, John. Will you do a little thing for me?

JOHN
What is it?

MIRALDA
Say you will do it, John. I should love to have one of my little wishes granted.

JOHN
What is it?

MIRALDA
Kill Daoud, John. I want you to kill Daoud.

JOHN
I will not.
[He walks up and down in front of the two Nubians in silence. She plucks petulantly at a pillow. She suddenly calms herself. A light comes into her eyes. The Nubians go on fanning. JOHN goes on pacing.]

MIRALDA
John, John, I have forgotten my foolish fancies.

JOHN
I am glad of it.

MIRALDA
I do not really wish you to kill Daoud.

JOHN *[same voice]*
I'm glad you don't.

MIRALDA
I have only one fancy now, John.

JOHN
Well, what is it?

MIRALDA
Give a banquet, John. I want you to give a banquet.

JOHN
A banquet? Why?

MIRALDA
Is there any harm in my fancy?

JOHN
No.

MIRALDA
Then if I may not be a queen, and if you will not kill Daoud for me, give a

banquet, John. There is no harm in a banquet.

JOHN
Very well. When do you want it?

MIRALDA
To-morrow, John. Bid all the great ones to it, all the illustrious ones in Al Shaldomir.

JOHN
Very well.

MIRALDA
And bid Daoud come.

JOHN
Daoud? You asked me to kill him.

MIRALDA
I do not wish that any longer, John.

JOHN
You have queer moods, Miralda.

MIRALDA
May I not change my moods, John?

JOHN
I don’t know. I don’t understand them.

MIRALDA
And ask Hafiz el Alcolahn, John.

JOHN
Hafiz? Why?

MIRALDA
I don’t know, John. It was just my fancy.

JOHN
Your fancy, eh?

MIRALDA
That was all.

JOHN
Then I will ask him. Have you any other fancy?

MIRALDA
Not now, John.

JOHN
Then go, Miralda.

MIRALDA
Go?

JOHN
Yes.

MIRALDA
Why?

JOHN
Because I command it.

MIRALDA
Because you command it?

JOHN
Yes, I, the Shereef Al Shaldomir.

MIRALDA
Very well.
[Exit L.
He walks to the door to see that she is really gone. He comes back to centre and stands with back to audience, pulling a cord quietly from his pocket and arranging it.

He moves half left and comes up behind BAZZALOL. Suddenly he slips the cord over BAZZALOL's head, and tightens it round his neck.]
[BAZZALOL flops on his knees.

THOOTHOOBABA goes on fanning.]

JOHN
Speak!
[BAZZALOL is silent.

JOHN tightens it more. THOOTHOOBABA goes on quietly fanning.]

BAZZALOL
I cannot.

JOHN
If you would speak, raise your left hand. If you raise your left hand and do not speak you shall die.
[BAZZALOL is silent. JOHN tightens more. BAZZALOL raises his great flabby left hand high. JOHN releases the cord. BAZZALOL blinks and moves his mouth.]

BAZZALOL
Gracious Shereef, one visited the great lady and gave us gold, saying, "Speak not."

JOHN
When?

BAZZALOL
Great master, one hour since.

JOHN *[a little viciously]*
Who?

BAZZALOL
O heaven-sent, he was Hafiz el Alcolahn.

JOHN
Give me the gold.
[BAZZALOL gives it.]
[To THOOTHOOBABA.] Give me the gold.

THOOTHOOBABA
Master, none gave me gold.
[John touches his dagger, and looks like using it.

THOOTHOOBABA gives it.]

JOHN
Take back your gold. Be silent about this. You too.
[He throws gold to BAZZALOL.]
Gold does not make you silent, but there is a thing that does. What is that thing? Speak. What thing makes you silent?

BAZZALOL
O, great master, it is death.

JOHN
Death, eh? And how will you die if you speak? You know how you will die?

BAZZALOL
Yes, heaven-sent.

JOHN
Tell your comrade, then.

BAZZALOL
We shall be eaten, great master.

JOHN
You know by what?

BAZZALOL
Small things, great master, small things. Oh-h-h-h. Oh-h-h.
[THOOTHOOBABA's knees scarcely hold him.]

JOHN
It is well.
Curtain

SCENE 2

A small street. Al Shaldomir.
Time: Next day.
[Enter L. the SHEIK OF THE BISHAREENS.
He goes to an old green door, pointed of course in the Arabic way.]

SHEIK OF THE BISHAREENS
Ho, Bishareens!
[The BISHAREENS run on.]

SHEIK
It is the place and the hour.

BISHAREENS
Ah, ah!

SHEIK *[to FIRST BISHAREEN]*
Watch.
[FIRST BISHAREEN goes to right and watches up sunny street.]

FIRST BISHAREEN
He comes.
[Enter HAFIZ EL ALCOLAHN. He goes straight up to the SHEIK and whispers.]

SHEIK *[turning]*
Hear, O Bishareens.
[HAFIZ places flute to his lips.]

A BISHAREEN
And the gold, master?

SHEIK
Silence! It is the signal.
[HAFIZ plays a weird, strange tune on his flute.]

HAFIZ
So.

SHEIK
Master, once more.
[HAFIZ raises the flute again to his lips.]

SHEIK
Hear, O Bishareens!
[He plays the brief tune again.]

HAFIZ *[to SHEIK]*
Like that.

SHEIK
We have heard, O master.
[He walks away L. Hands move in the direction of knife-hilts.]

THE BISHAREENS
Ah, ah!
[Exit HAFIZ.
He plays a merry little tune on his flute as he walks away.]
Curtain

SCENE 3

The banqueting hall. A table along the back. JOHN and MIRALDA seated with notables of Al Shaldomir.

JOHN sits in the centre, with MIRALDA on his right and, next to her, HAFIZ EL ALCOLAHN.

MIRALDA *[to JOHN]*
You bade Daoud be present?

JOHN
Yes.

MIRALDA
He is not here.

JOHN
Daoud not here?

MIRALDA
No.

JOHN
Why?

MIRALDA
We all obey you, but not Daoud.

JOHN
I do not understand it.

A NOTABLE
The Shereef has frowned.
[Enter R. an OFFICER-AT-ARMS. He halts at once and salutes with his sword, then takes a side pace to his left, standing against the wall, sword at the carry.

JOHN acknowledges salute by touching his forehead with the inner tips of his fingers.]

OFFICER-AT-ARMS
Soldiers of Al Shaldomir; with the dance-step; march.
[Enter R. some men in single file; uniform, pale green silks; swords at carry. They advance in single file, in a slightly serpentine way, deviating to their left a little out of the straight and returning to it, stepping neatly on the tips of their toes. Their march is fantastic and odd without being exactly funny. The OFFICER-AT-ARMS falls in on their left flank and marches about level with the third or fourth man. When he reaches the centre he gives another word of command.]

OFFICER-AT-ARMS
With reverence: Salute.
[The actor who takes this part should have been an officer or N. C. O.

JOHN stands up and acknowledges their salute by touching his forehead with the fingers of the right hand, palm turned inwards.
Exeunt soldiers L. JOHN sits down.]

A NOTABLE
He does not smile this evening.

A WOMAN
The Shereef?

NOTABLE
He has not smiled.
[Enter R. ZABNOOL, a CONJURER, with brass bowl. He bows. He walks to centre opposite JOHN. He exhibits his bowl.]

ZABNOOL
Behold. The bowl is empty.
[ZABNOOL produces a snake.]

ZABNOOL
Ah, little servant of Death.

[He produces flowers.]
Flowers, master, flowers. All the way from Nowhere.
[He produces birds.]
Birds, master. Birds from Nowhere. Sing, sing to the Shereef. Sing the little empty songs of the land of Nowhere.
[He seats himself on the ground facing JOHN. He puts the bowl on the ground. He places a piece of silk, with queer designs on it over the bowl. He partly draws the silk away with his left hand and puts in his right. He brings out a young crocodile and holds it by the neck.]

CONJURER
Behold, O Shereef; O people, behold; a crocodile.
[He arises and bows to JOHN and wraps up the crocodile in some drapery and walks away. As he goes he addresses his crocodile.]
O eater of lambs, O troubler of the rivers, you sought to evade me in an empty bowl. O thief, O appetite, you sought to evade the Shereef. The Shereef has seen you, O vexer of swimmers, O pig in armour, O...
[Exit.

SHABEESH, another CONJURER, rushes on.]

SHABEESH
Bad man, master; he very, very bad man.
[He pushes ZABNOOL away roughly, impetus of which carries ZABNOOL to the wings.]
Very, very bad man, master.

MIRALDA *[reprovingly]*
Zabnool has amused us.

SHABEESH
He very, very bad man, lily lady. He get crocodile from devil. From devil Poolyana, lily lady. Very, very bad.

MIRALDA
He may call on devils if he amuse us, Shabeesh.

SHABEESH
But Poolyana, my devil. He call on my devil, lily lady. Very, very, very bad. My devil Poolyana.

MIRALDA
Call on him yourself, Shabeesh. Amuse us.

SHABEESH
Shall one devil serve two masters?

MIRALDA
Why not?

SHABEESH *[beginning to wave priestly conjurer's hands]*
Very bad man go away. Go away, bad man: go away, bad man. Poolyana not want bad man: Poolyana only work for good man. He mighty fine devil. Poolyana, Poolyana. Big, black, fine, furry devil. Poolyana, Poolyana, Poolyana. O fine, fat devil with big angry tail. Poolyana, Poolyana, Poolyana. Send me up fine young pig for the Shereef. Poolyana, Poolyana. Lil yellow pig with curly tail. *[Small pig appears.]* O Poolyana, great Poolyana. Fine black fur and grey fur underneath. Fine ferocious devil you my devil, Poolyana. O, Poolyana, Poolyana, Poolyana. Send me a big beast what chew bad man's crocodile. Big beast with big teeth, eat him like a worm.
[He has spread large silk handkerchief on floor and is edging back from it in alarm.]
Long nails in him toes, big like lion, Poolyana. Send great smelly big beast — eat up bad man's crocodile.
[At first stir of handkerchief SHABEESH leaps in alarm.]
He come, he come. I see his teeth and horns.
[Enter small live rabbit from trapdoor under handkerchief.]
O, Poolyana, you big devil have your liddle joke. You laugh at poor conjuring man. You send him lil rabbit to eat big crocodile. Bad Poolyana. Bad Poolyana.
[Whacks ground with stick.]
You plenty bad devil, Poolyana.
[Whacking it again. Handkerchief has been thrown on ground again.

Handkerchief stirs slightly.]
No, no, Poolyana. You not bad devil. You not bad devil. You plenty good devil, Poolyana. No, no, no! Poor conjuring man quite happy on muddy earth. No, Poolyana, no! O, no, no, devil. O, no, no! Hell plenty nice place for devil. Master! He not my devil! He other man's devil!

JOHN
What's this noise? What's it about? What's the matter?

SHABEESH *[in utmost terror]*
He coming, master! Coming!

ZABNOOL
Poolyana, Poolyana, Poolyana. Stay down, stay down, Poolyana. Stay down in nice warm hell, Poolyana. The Shereef want no devil to-day.
[ZABNOOL before speaking returns to centre and pats air over ground where handkerchief lies.
Then SHABEESH and ZABNOOL come together side by side and bow and smile together toward the SHEREEF. Gold is thrown to them, which ZABNOOL gathers and hands to SHABEESH, who gives a share back to ZABNOOL.]

A NOTABLE
The Shereef is silent.
[Enter three women R. in single file, dancing, and carrying baskets full of pink rose-leaves. They dance across, throwing down rose-leaves, leaving a path of them behind them. Exeunt L.]

A NOTABLE
Still he is silent.

MIRALDA
Why do you not speak?

JOHN
I do not wish to speak.

MIRALDA
Why?
[Enter OMAR with his zither.]

OMAR *[singing]*

Al Shaldomir, Al Shaldomir,
Birds sing thy praises night and day;
The nightingale in every wood,
Blackbirds in fields profound with may;
Birds sing of thee by every way.

Al Shaldomir, Al Shaldomir,
My heart is ringing with thee still
Though far away, O fairy fields,
My soul flies low by every hill
And misses not one daffodil.

Al Shaldomir, Al Shaldomir,
O mother of my roving dreams
Blue is the night above thy spires
And blue by myriads of streams
Paradise through thy gateway gleams.

MIRALDA
Why do you not wish to speak?

JOHN
You desire me to speak?

MIRALDA
No. They all wonder why you do not speak; that is all.

JOHN
I will speak. They shall hear me.

MIRALDA
O, there is no need to.

JOHN
There is a need. *[He rises.]* People of Shaldomir, behold I know your plottings. I know the murmurings that you murmur against me. When I sleep in my inner chamber my ear is in the market, while I sit at meat I hear men whisper far hence and know their innermost thoughts. Hope not to overcome me by your plans nor by any manner of craftiness. My gods are gods of brass; none have escaped them. They cannot be overthrown. Of all men they favour my people. Their hands reach out to the uttermost ends of the earth. Take heed, for my gods are terrible. I am the Shereef; if any dare withstand me I will call on my gods and they shall crush him utterly. They shall grind him into the earth and trample him under, as though he had not been. The uttermost parts have feared the gods of the English. They reach out, they destroy, there is no escape from them. Be warned; for I do not permit any to stand against me. The laws that I have given you, you shall keep; there shall be no other laws. Whoso murmurs shall know my wrath and the wrath of my gods. Take heed, I speak not twice. I spoke once to Hussein. Hussein heard not; and Hussein is dead, his ears are closed for ever. Hear, O people.

HAFIZ

O Shereef, we murmur not against you.

JOHN
I know thoughts and hear whispers. I need not instruction, Hafiz.

HAFIZ
You exalt yourself over us as none did aforetime.

JOHN
Yes. And I will exalt myself. I have been Shereef hitherto, but now I will be king. Al Shaldomir is less than I desire. I have ruled too long over a little country. I will be the equal of Persia. I will be king; I proclaim it. The pass is mine; the mountains shall be mine also. And he that rules the mountains has mastery over all the plains beyond. If the men of the plains will not own it let them make ready; for my wrath will fall on them in the hour when they think me afar, on a night when they think I dream. I proclaim myself king over...

[HAFIZ pulls out his flute and plays the weird, strange tune. JOHN looks at him in horrified anger.]

JOHN
The penalty is death! Death is the punishment for what you do, Hafiz. You have dared while I spoke. Hafiz, your contempt is death. Go to Hussein. I, the king... say it.
[DAOUD has entered R., bearing two oars. DAOUD walks across, not looking at JOHN. Exit by small door in L. near back.

JOHN gives one look at the banqueters, then he follows DAOUD. Exit. All look astonished. Some rise and peer. HAFIZ draws his knife.]

OMAR *[singing]*
Al Shaldomir, Al Shaldomir, The nightingales that guard thy ways Cease not to give thee, after God And after Paradise, all praise.

CRIES *[off]*
Kill the unbeliever. Kill the dog. Kill the Christian.
[Enter the SHEIK OF THE BISHAREENS, followed by all his men.]

SHEIK
We are the Bishareens, master.
[MIRALDA standing up, right arm akimbo, left arm pointing perfectly straight out towards the small door, hand extended.]

MIRALDA
He is there.
[The BISHAREENS run off through the little door.]

A NOTABLE
Not to interfere with old ways is wisest.

ANOTHER
Indeed, it would have been well for him.
[The BISHAREENS begin to return looking all about them like disappointed hounds.]

A BISHAREEN
He is not there, master.

HAFIZ
Not there? Not there? Why, there is no door beyond. He must needs be there, and his chief spy with him.

SHEIK *[off]*
He is not here.

MIRALDA *[turning round and clawing the wall]*
O, I was weary of him. I was weary of him.

HAFIZ
Be comforted, pearl of the morning; he is gone.

MIRALDA
When I am weary of a man he must die.
[He embraces her knees.]

ZAGBOOLA *[who has come on with a little crowd that followed the BISHAREENS. She is blind.]*
Lead me to Hafiz. I am the mother of Hafiz. Lead me to Hafiz. *[They lead her near.]* Hafiz! Hafiz!
[She finds his shoulder and tries to drag him away.]

HAFIZ
Go! Go! I have found the sole pearl of the innermost deeps of the sea.
[He is kneeling and kissing MIRALDA's hand. ZAGBOOLA wails.]
Curtain

ACT IV

SCENE 1

Three years elapse.
Scene: The street outside the Acacias.
Time: Evening.
[Ali leans on a pillar-box watching. John shuffles on L. He is miserably dressed, an Englishman down on his luck. A nightingale sings far off.]

JOHN
A nightingale here. Well, I never.
Al Shaldomir, Al Shaldomir, The nightingales that guard thy ways Cease not to give thee, after God And after Paradise, all praise...
The infernal place! I wish I had never seen it! Wonder what set me thinking of that?
[The nightingale sings another bar. JOHN turns to his left and walks down the little path that leads to the door of the Acacias.]
I mustn't come here. Mustn't come to a fine house like this. Mustn't. Mustn't.
[He draws near it reluctantly. He puts his hand to the bell and withdraws it. Then he rings and snatches his hand away. He prepares to run away. Finally he rings it repeatedly, feverishly, violently.
Enter LIZA, opening the door.]

LIZA
Ullo, 'Oo's this!

JOHN
I oughtn't to have rung, miss, I know. I oughtn't to have rung your bell; but I've seen better days, and wondered if — I wondered...

LIZA
I oughtn't to 'ave opened the door, that's wot I oughtn't. Now I look at you, I oughtn't to 'ave opened it. Wot does you want?

JOHN
O, don't turn me away now, miss. I must come here. I must.

LIZA
Must? Why?

JOHN
I don't know.

LIZA
Wot do you want?

JOHN
Who lives here?

LIZA
Mr. and Mrs. Cater; firm of Briggs, Cater, and Johnstone. What do you want?

JOHN
Could I see Mr. Cater?

LIZA
He's out. Dining at the Mansion House.

JOHN
Oh.

LIZA
He is.

JOHN
Could I see Mrs. Cater?

LIZA
See Mrs. Cater? No, of course you couldn't.
[She prepares to shut the door.]

JOHN
Miss! Miss! Don't go, miss. Don't shut me out. If you knew what I'd suffered, if you knew what I'd suffered. Don't!

LIZA *[coming forward again]*
Suffered? Why? Ain't you got enough to eat?

JOHN
No, I've had nothing all day.

LIZA
'Aven't you really now?

JOHN
No. And I get little enough at any time.

LIZA *[kindly]*
You ought to work.

JOHN
I... I can't. I can't bring myself... I've seen better times.

LIZA
Still, you could work.

JOHN
I — I can't grub for halfpennies when I've — when I've...

LIZA
When you've what?

JOHN
Lost millions.

LIZA
Millions?

JOHN
I've lost everything.

LIZA
'Ow did you lose it?

JOHN
Through being blind. But never mind, never mind. It’s all gone now, and I’m hungry.

LIZA
‘Ow long ‘ave you been down on your luck?

JOHN
It’s three years now.

LIZA
Couldn’t get a regular job, like?

JOHN
Well, I suppose I might have. I suppose it’s my fault, miss. But the heart was out of me.

LIZA
Dear me, now.

JOHN
Miss.

LIZA
Yes?

JOHN
You’ve a kind face...

LIZA
‘Ave I?

JOHN
Yes. Would you do me a kind turn?

LIZA
Well, I dunno. I might, as yer so down on yer luck — I don’t like to see a man like you are, I must say.

JOHN
Would you let me come into the big house and speak to the missus a moment?

LIZA
She'd row me awful if I did. This house is very respectable.

JOHN
I feel, if you would, I feel, I feel my luck might change.

LIZA
But I don't know what she'd say if I did.

JOHN
Miss, I must.

LIZA
I don't know wot she'd say.

JOHN
I must come in, miss, I must.

LIZA
I don't know what she'll say.

JOHN
I must. I can't help myself.

LIZA
I don't know what she'll...
[JOHN is in, door shuts.]
[ALI throws his head up and laughs, but quite silently.]
Curtain

SCENE 2

The drawing-room at the Acacias.
A moment later.
The scene is the same as in Act I, except that the sofa which was red is now green, and the photograph of Aunt Martha is replaced by that of a frowning old colonel. The ages of the four children in the photographs are the same, but their sexes have changed.
[MARY reading. Enter LIZA.]

LIZA
There's a gentleman to see you, mum, which is, properly speaking, not a gentleman at all, but 'e would come in, mum.

MARY
Not a gentleman! Good gracious, Liza, whatever do you mean?

LIZA
'E would come in, mum.

MARY
But what does he want?

LIZA *[over shoulder]*
What does you want?

JOHN *[entering]*
I am a beggar.

MARY
O, really? You've no right to be coming into houses like this, you know.

JOHN
I know that, madam, I know that. Yet somehow I couldn't help myself. I've been begging for nearly three years now, and I've never done this before, yet somehow to-night I felt impelled to come to this house. I beg your pardon, humbly. Hunger drove me to it.

MARY
Hunger?

JOHN
I’m very hungry, madam.

MARY
Unfortunately Mr. Cater has not yet returned, or perhaps he might...

JOHN
If you could give me a little to eat yourself, madam, a bit of stale bread, a crust, something that Mr. Cater would not want.

MARY
It’s very unusual, coming into a house like this and at such an hour — it’s past eleven o’clock — and Mr. Cater not yet returned. Are you really hungry?

JOHN
I’m very, very hungry.

MARY
Well, it’s very unusual; but perhaps I might get you a little something.
[She picks up an empty plate from the supper table.]

JOHN
Madam, I do not know how to thank you.

MARY
O, don’t mention it.

JOHN
I have not met such kindness for three years. I... I’m starving. I’ve known better times.

MARY *[kindly]*
I’ll get you something. You’ve known better times, you say?

JOHN
I had been intended for work in the City. And then, then I travelled, and — and I got very much taken with foreign countries, and I thought — but it all went to pieces. I lost everything. Here I am, starving.

MARY *[as one might reply to the Mayoress who had lost her gloves]*
O, I'm so sorry.
[JOHN sighs deeply.]

MARY
I'll get a nice bit of something to eat.

JOHN
A thousand thanks to you, madam.
[Exit MARY with the plate.]

LIZA *[who has been standing near the door all the time]*
Well, she's going to get you something.

JOHN
Heaven reward her.

LIZA
Hungry as all that?

JOHN
I'm on my beam ends.

LIZA
Cheer up!

JOHN
That's all very well to say, living in a fine house, as you are, dry and warm and well-fed. But what have I to cheer up about?

LIZA
Isn't there anything you could pop?

JOHN
What?

LIZA
Nothing you can take to the pawn-shop? I've tided over times I wanted a bit of cash that way sometimes.

JOHN
What could I pawn?

LIZA
Well, well you've a watch-chain.

JOHN
A bit of old leather.

LIZA
But what about the watch?

JOHN
I've no watch.

LIZA
O, funny having a watch-chain then.

JOHN
O, that's only for this; it's a bit of crystal.

LIZA
Funny bit of a thing. What's it for?

JOHN
I don't know.

LIZA
Was it give to you?

JOHN
I don't know. I don't know how I got it.

LIZA
Don’t know how you got it?

JOHN
No, I can’t remember at all. But I’ve a feeling about it, I can’t explain what I feel; but I don’t part with it.

LIZA
Don’t you? You might get something on it, likely and have a square meal.

JOHN
I won’t part with it.

LIZA
Why?

JOHN
I feel I won’t. I never have.

LIZA
Feel you won’t?

JOHN
Yes, I have that feeling very strongly. I’ve kept it always. Everything else is gone.

LIZA
Had it long?

JOHN
Yes, yes. About ten years. I found I had it one morning in a train. It’s odd that I can’t remember.

LIZA
But wot d’yer keep it for?

JOHN
Just for luck.

[LIZA breaks into laughter.]

LIZA
Well, you are funny.

JOHN
I'm on my beam ends. I don't know if that is funny.

LIZA
You're as down in your luck as ever you can be, and you go keeping a thing like that for luck. Why, you couldn't be funnier.

JOHN
Well, what would you do?

LIZA
Why, I 'ad a mascot once, all real gold; and I had rotten luck. Rotten luck I had. Rotten.

JOHN
And what did you do?

LIZA
Took it back to the shop.

JOHN
Yes?

LIZA
They was quite obliging about it. Gave me a wooden one instead, what was guaranteed. Luck changed very soon altogether.

JOHN
Could luck like mine change?

LIZA
Course it could.

JOHN
Look at me.

LIZA
You'll be all right one of these days. Give me that mascot.

JOHN
I — I hardly like to. One has an awfully strong feeling with it.

LIZA
Give it to me. It's no good.

JOHN
I — I don't like to.

LIZA
You just give it to me. I tell you it's doing you no good. I know all about them mascots. Give it me.

JOHN
Well, I'll give it you. You're the first woman that's been kind to me since ... I'm on my beam ends.
[Face in hands — tears.]

LIZA
There, there. I'm going to smash it, I am. These mascots! One's better without 'em. Your luck'll turn, never fear. And you've a nice supper coming.
[She puts it in a corner of the mantelpiece and hammers it. It smashes. The photographs of the four children change slightly. The Colonel gives place to Aunt Martha. The green sofa turns red. JOHN's clothes become neat and tidy. The hammer in LIZA's hand turns to a feather duster. Nothing else changes.]

A VOICE *[off, in agony]*
Allah! Allah! Allah!

LIZA
Some foreign gentleman must have hurt himself.

JOHN
H’m. Sounds like it... Liza.
[LIZA, dusting the photographs on the wall, just behind the corner of the mantelpiece.]

LIZA
Funny. Thought I — thought I ‘ad a hammer in my hand.

JOHN
Really, Liza, I often think you have. You really should be more careful. Only — only yesterday you broke the glass of Miss Jane’s photograph.

LIZA
Thought it was a hammer.

JOHN
Really, I think it sometimes is. It’s a mistake you make too often, Liza. You — you must be more careful.

LIZA
Very well, sir. Funny my thinking I ‘ad an ‘ammer in my ‘and, though.
[She goes to tidy the little supper table. Enter MARY with food on a plate.]

MARY
I’ve brought you your supper, John.

JOHN
Thanks, Mary. I — I think I must have taken a nap.

MARY
Did you, dear? Thanks, Liza. Run along to bed now, Liza. Good gracious, it’s half-past eleven.
[MARY makes final arrangements of supper table.]

LIZA
Thank you, mum.
[Exit]

JOHN
Mary.

MARY
Yes, John.

JOHN
I — I thought I’d caught that train.
Curtain

The Poetry Collection



The University of Athens, where Dunsany was appointed Byron Professor of English in 1940. The Italian Invasion of Greece effectively ended his appointment and he had to be evacuated. His subsequent travels in Europe became the subject of a long poem.

FIFTY POEMS



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Please note: only forty-nine poems (and not fifty) were published in the collection.

NOTE.

MY thanks are due to the following papers, in which some of the poems have appeared — *The Argosy, The Atlantic Monthly, Britannia, The Daily Express, Eve, The London Mercury, The Microcosm, The Morning Post, The New York Evening Post, The New York Tribune, The Saturday Evening Post* (Philadelphia), *The Saturday Review, The Saturday Review of Literature* (New York), *The Spectator, The Times.*

ART AND LIFE

THERE is SO much to catch
As the days go by,
The line of some queer old thatch
Against wintry sky,

The huge red sun of November
Threatening snow,
Dark woods that seem to remember
Ages ago,

Gold king-cups crowning the ditches,
Windows agleam,
Old willows standing like witches
Haunting a stream,

Far mountains lit with a glow
That is tremulous
With something we only know
Is never for us,

All shapes of rocks and of trees
That a rune has enchanted,
All sounds that sigh upon seas
Or lands that are haunted.

So much there is to catch,
And the years so short,
That there is scarce time to snatch
Pen, palette, or aught,

And to seize some shape we can see,
That others may keep
Its moment of mystery,
Then go to our sleep.

THE HUNTER DREAMS IN HIS CLUB

A DIM grey dawn with a streak of amber
Is breaking now, though I know not where.
Blue pigeons soar, and the monkeys clamber
Up from dark to the gleaming air.

Hushed as though it had seen a gorgon
A bush-buck stands at the forest's edge;
A strange bird calls like an opening organ,
Tiny myriads talk in the sedge.

Gone by now is the fireflies' wonder,
Lost to sight with the Milky Way;
Suddenly near, the zebras' thunder
Rolls for joy at another day.

Flowers bright as a painter's palettes
Give their honey to brighter birds;
While upon feet like monstrous mallets
The bull rhinoceros goes to his herds.

A little wind like Aurora's shiver
Blows, and the light is brighter far.
Dawn grows wide on an unmapped river,
Out goes the light of a large low star.

The sun leaps up, and at once the grasses
Flash as bright as the eye can bear.
Far off, clear quartz in the mountain passes
Beckons on. But I know not where.

A SONG OF WANDERING

SOME crumpled-rose-leaf mountains, from forty miles away,
Are luring me towards them, through all the blazing day,
Some crumpled-rose-leaf mountains, flecked here and there with blue,
They call to me and beckon as elfin hands might do.

And deeper pink beyond them a double summit towers,
Like Chronos grave and weary above the younger Powers.
Behind me the Sahara, before — those barren crags,
And with me the old hunter, illustrious in his rags.

When I am back in London, amongst the hoardings' blaze,
And pictures of bad food and salt that men are paid to praise,
When, bright with lights that dim the stars, the foolish words are writ,
To Crumpled-rose-leaf Mountain my thoughts will fly from it.

EVENING IN AFRICA

As blue as sapphire rocky Gsoom
Is fading in a rosy sky,
Hills I've imagined had no gloom
More grand than this one seen with eye.

Westward of Djebal Hamra sink
The rays, and all Sahara's blue
Bursts into little waves of pink
That fade as dreams at morning do.

And cliffs, unseen before, shine steep
On the horizon bright and long,
As cities only seen in sleep
And only spoken of in song.

Like sparks these glories I have known
Shall flash, though faintly, from my pen.
What was not given for me alone
Shall shine years hence for many men.

NIGHT

NIGHT falls on the lone
Sahara, and spark by spark
Arabs I have not known
Light fires in the dark.

Of the specks of ash in the smoke,
Which atom knows
From what fire it awoke,
Or whither it goes?

In the wilds of Space, in the dark,
Spiral nebulae
Twirl spark upon spark,
Whereof one are we.

Who can say for what task
They arose, or whither they slip?
And all the Spirits I ask
Stand, finger on lip.

ODE TO A DUBLIN CRITIC

THROUGH steely gaps that I have known
In mirage mountains, upon wings
Has my imagination flown
To bring you news of magic things.

And lesser journalists have said,
That cannot see such things themselves,
The man is clearly off his head
To write of things like gods and elves.

By walls of cities not of Earth
All wild my winged dreams have run,
And known the demons that had birth
In planets of another sun.

From little fountain-pens they wring
The last wee drop of inky spite:
“We do not like the kind of thing
That lords,” they say, “most likely, write.”

Beyond the boundaries I have been,
That dull geography has drawn,
To bring you light from visions seen
In kingdoms eastward of the dawn.

IN THE SAHARA

OH, you that stay in cities, saw you this pretty thing?
The moon was new on Sunday, all in a silver ring.
Now it is veiled and curious, no more a shining hoop,
And the wind is in the Desert, and the sand is in the soup.

The wind that Allah bridles is free to-night to roam,
Like camels in the evening, when the caravans are home.
The tent-ropes creak uneasily, the soup is full of grit,
And all the cooks of London have not the like of it.

I know years hence in cities, when Spring has scarce touched Spain,
I'll yearn for mighty spaces and fret to see again,
As on some larger planet, the huge horizon's loop,
When the wind is in the Desert and the sand is in the soup.

UNDER MOUNT MONADNOCK

LIKE a flame the maple blazes with the oak leaves;
All in windless weather the huge apples fall.
Sunset and twilight: birches haunt the evening,
Walking in the wild wood slender and tall.

High above the splendour mightily Monadnock
Sleeps in starry spaces, dreaming of his reign,
Long since a monarch holy to the Indians,
Waiting for his people to come home again.

In thy starry spaces be at ease, Monadnock,
Many a busy city leaves no stone or track:
All our speed and progress have Egypt for a warning;
Over mossy girders the old folk come back.

THE TRAVELLER

BEAUTIFUL when the world lies dreaming
Are the lights from the Evening Star's
Oceans of pale blue water gleaming,
And the tawny deserts of Mars.

Alas that they lie beyond our reaches,
Our sisters sidereal,
And never an earth-ship touches the beaches
Of any one of them all.

Yet far journeys we can adventure,
For from mind to mind there lie
Spaces of apathy, doubting and censure,
Through which our thoughts scarce fly.

And whoever bridges the gap between us,
We being lonely as stars,
Is well on his way to Jupiter, Venus,
Mercury, Saturn and Mars.

SONGS FROM AN EVIL WOOD

I

THERE is no wrath in the stars,
They do not rage in the sky;
I look from the evil wood
And find myself wondering why.

Why do they not scream out
And grapple star against star,
Seeking for blood in the wood,
As all things round me are?

They do not glare like the sky
Or flash like the deeps of the wood;
But they shine softly on
In their sacred solitude.

To their high happy haunts
Silence from us has flown,
She whom we loved of old
And know it now she is gone.

When will she come again
Though for one second only?
She whom we loved is gone
And the whole world is lonely.

II

Somewhere lost in the haze
The sun goes down in the cold,
And birds in this evil wood
Chirrup home as of old;

Chirrup, stir and are still,
On the high twigs frozen and thin.
There is no more noise of them now,
And the long night sets in.

Of all the wonderful things
That I have seen in the wood
I marvel most at the birds,
At their chirp and their quietude.

For a giant smites with his club
All day the tops of the hill,
Sometimes he rests at night,
Oftener he beats them still.

And a dwarf with a grim black mane
Raps with repeated rage
All night in the valley below
On the wooden walls of his cage.

And the elder giants come
Sometimes, tramping from far,
Through the weird and flickering light
Made by an earthly star.

And the giant with his club,
And the dwarf with rage in his breath,
And the elder giants from far,
They are all the children of Death.

They are all abroad to-night
And are breaking the hills with their brood,
And the birds are all asleep,
Even in Plugstreet Wood.

THE MEMORIAL

I SAW a pear-tree on a garden wall
Stretching its arms quite fifteen feet each way.
There was no garden near, nor house at all:
Flower and field and farm were passed away.
Many memorials can the Kaiser boast,
Yet this may stand for him as well as most.

A DIRGE OF VICTORY

LIFT not thy trumpet, Victory, to the sky,
Nor through battalions nor by batteries blow,
But over hollows full of old wire go,
Where, among dregs of war, the long-dead lie
With wasted iron that the guns passed by
When they went eastward like a tide at flow;
There blow thy trumpet that the dead may know,
Who waited for thy coming, Victory.

It is not we that have deserved thy wreath.
They waited there among the towering weeds:
The deep mud burned under the thermite's breath,
And winter cracked the bones that no man heeds:
Hundreds of nights flamed by: the seasons passed.
And thou hast come to them at last, at last!

TO THE FALLEN IRISH SOLDIERS

SINCE they have grudged you space in Merrion Square,
And any monument of stone or brass,
And you yourselves are powerless, alas,
And your own countrymen seem not to care;
Let then these words of mine drift down the air,
Lest the world think that it has come to pass
That *all* in Ireland treat as common grass
The soil that wraps her heroes slumbering there.

Sleep on forgot a few more years, and then
The ages, that I prophesy, shall see
Due honours paid to you by juster men,
You standing foremost in our history,
Your story filling all our land with wonder,
Your names, and regiments' names, like distant thunder.

THE RIDERS

WHO treads those level lands of gold,
The level fields of mist and air,
And rolling mountains manifold
And towers of twilight over there?

No mortal foot upon them strays,
No archer in the towers dwells,
But feet too airy for our ways
Go up and down their hills and dells.

The people out of old romance,
And people that have never been,
And those that on the border dance
Between old history and between

Resounding fable, as the king
Who held his court at Camelot.
There Guinevere is wandering
And there the knight Sir Lancelot.

And by you precipice of white,
As steep as Roncesvalles, and more,
Within an inch of fancy's sight
Roland the peerless rides to war.

And just the tip of Quixote s spear,
The greatest of them all by far,
Is surely visible from here!
But no; it is the Evening Star.

THE WATCHERS

THE world of old in its orbit moving
Chanced to pass (if there's chance at all)
Near to the path of two Spirits' roving,
Who stood and looked at the large green ball.

Morning flashed upon tusk and pinion,
Tooth and talon, of tribes at war.
"Who, we wonder, will win dominion?
Which will rule in the little star?"

Little scope there appeared for wonder:
The mammoth strode from the forest's dusk.
Who but he, with his hooves of thunder?
Who but he, with his lightning tusk?

Yet there seemed in his monstrous striding,
Heaving weight and enormous ears,
Something gross. So, before deciding,
"Come again in a million years."

Through the vault where the stars are sprinkled
Ages passed from the world away.
All of that time Orion twinkled:
Nothing changed in the Milky Way.

Again they stood where the world was rolling,
Again they watched, and saw, this time, Man,
Heard the roar of his engines coaling,
Scanned his cities to guess his plan,

Peered through clouds that his smoke turned sour
Even spied on his hopes and fears.
"Yes" they said, "he has surely power.
But, come again in a million years."

THE ENCHANTED PEOPLE

IT came, it came again to the scented garden,
The call that they would not heed,
A clear wild note far up on the hills above them,
Blown on an elfin reed.

From the heath in the hidden dells of a moorland people
It came so crystal clear
That they could not help a moment's pause on their pathways,
They could not choose but hear.

The very blackbird, perched on the wall by cherries
Ripe at the end of June,
Made never a stir through all of his glossy body,
Learning that unknown tune.

Two rabbits paused midway between fear and wonder,
Not knowing whether to run
Or whether to find their way to the heathery upland,
Far up, facing the sun.

They needs must hear as they walked in their valley garden,
Surely they needs must heed
That it came from a folk as magical and as enchanted
As ever blew upon reed.

Surely they must arise in the heavy valley,
Sleepy with years of night,
And go to the old immortal things out of fable
That danced young on the height.

But the moss was black and old on the paths about them,
And the weeds were old and deep,
And they could not remember who were high on the uplands;
And they needed sleep.

And they thought that a day might come when someone would call them
With a song more loud and plain.
And the call rang past like birds going over a desert,
And it never came again.

LADY BLAYN

MY hostess said, “Will you
Please take in Lady Blayn?”
Almost at once I knew,
By some light in the brain,
That all I’d tried to do
And all my labour’s gain,
Keats’s and Shelley’s too,
All that the merry crew
Had rhymed the whole world through,
For her was done in vain.

INSCRIBED IN A COPY OF “FIVE PLAYS”

“*.. in the hope that you will put your name in it, and that of my little niece, Martha Owen Clarke, for whom the book is intended as a Christmas gift*.”

MARTHA OWEN CLARKE I write,
Exactly as your auntie tells.
And when the stars are blue and bright
May the reindeer sleigh with bells
Find your chimney in the night.

INSCRIBED IN A COPY OF “THE KING OF ELFLAND’S DAUGHTER”

To Mrs. Cazalet I send
What this year’s harvest yields
Of dreams, whose glittering crops extend
At moonrise through the wealds;
And some I gathered at World’s End
And some in common fields.

AT THE TIME OF THE FULL MOON

IT is dark to-night in moon-country
On the far side of its girth,
It is all dark in the valleys
Where none seeth Earth.

The sun with his day-long dawning
To-morrow in that land
Will rise with a golden anger
On the old rocks and the sand;

But they never see, there, Earth's splendour
Lift like a silver hill
Monstrously over the sea-beds
That no waters fill,

Gleaming with eerie beauty,
Continents bright, and the seas
Lucid as palest sapphires
Sold by the Cingalese;

With the long shadows lying
Black, in a land alight
With a more luminous wonder
Than ever comes to our night.

They never see Earth float over,
Whoever they be;
And they know no hint of her purpose.
Neither do we.

THE HAPPY ISLES

A RUMOUR to the Romans came,
Got partly from a poet's lips
And part from sunset clouds aflame,
Seen dimly from the furthest ships.

It told how, westward of our hopes
And further far than any dream,
With dawn for ever on their slopes,
The Happy Isles are all agleam.

I think that some seafarer hurled
Beyond the Gates of Hercules,
Lost by the boundaries of the world
And tost upon the last of seas,

Saw Islay suddenly through haze,
By some wild shaft of sunshine lit,
Its heather gleaming in the rays,
And Jura gazing down on it.

NEMESIS

ONE lied and broke his word,
Almost I thought to hear
Nemesis striding near.
Yet not a footstep stirred.

Then, to a lonely place
By strong dreams borne away,
Far from his tracks astray
I saw her grim Greek face.

“Never she draweth near;
I erred,” I thought. She saith,
“On his neck is my breath,
My footfall in his ear.”

A HETERODOXY

I DREAMED one night I came
Somehow to Heaven, and there
Transfigured shapes like flame
Moved effortless in air.

All silent were the Blest,
Calmly their haloes shone,
When through them all there pressed
One spirit whirling on.

He like a comet seemed,
But wild and glad and free,
And all through Heaven, I dreamed,
Rushed madly up to me.

Back from his haloed head
A flaming tail streamed far,
This way and that it sped
And waved from star to star,

And, as I saw it shot
Like searchlights through the sky,
I knew my dog had got
To Heaven as well as I.

A MOMENT

BY the hush of the solemn fish
Below long leaves,
And the barely perceptible swish
Of their fairy fins that achieves

Their beautiful journeying;
By the heavy magical sleep
Of the light of that evening,
Dreaming there in the deep

Of the small round pool,
I knew there passed in the dim
Some wonderful moment full
Of fate for the things that swim

In a world where arbours of green
Dream and sway as they grow.
Though what that fate could have been
How shall I ever know?

ON A PORTRAIT

EVERY thought of the heart,
Every yearning and fear,
Is mirrored awhile in faces
As moving leaves in a mere.

And every glance of the eye
Smiling, and every frown,
Go the same way down to the darkness
With all that goes down.

Time went striding by,
Sweeping all things away.
Rembrandt looked up for a moment
And said to him: Stay.

TO A COFFIN FROM UR

HAVE you no more to tell, voice from an older day,
With your large green coffin and small handful of bone,
Have you no more to tell than that all passes away?
Which, were it not for the joy of the moment ere it is flown
And its gay promise to youth, almost would be known.

IN AN OLD LAND

GREY among dead leaves deep
The sad November fires
Burn in a land asleep
All among old desires.

In the chill hush near night
A spark suddenly clear
Glows with its lonely light,
Fades, and the night is here.

So in the people's sleep
A dream flashes out plain;
The years cover it deep,
And they are mute again.

AFFAIRS

OVER the lawn so late,
As the light dims to our eyes,
There go the bat and his mate,
The only mammal that flies.

“Are you not jealous,” I said
As he came fluttering by,
“That man, on wings he has made,
Now wanders over the sky?”

“Jealousy!” answered he,
“I have more to do than that.
There are entrusted to me
The high affairs of the bat.”

TO KEATS

ON a magical morning, with twinkling feet
And a song at his lips that was strange and sweet,
some body new came down the street
To the world's derision and laughter.

Now he is dumb with no more to say,
Now he is dead and taken away,
Silent and still, and leading the way,
And the world comes tumbling after.

THE FORSAKEN WINDMILL

LONELY and old, forlorn
Amongst the Kentish lands,
Still watching over corn,
A worn-out windmill stands.

We cannot grind, O Lord,
The corn our people need:
It must be ground abroad
By any other breed.

And what they grind we eat,
However fine the flour,
However white the wheat
That foreign chemists scour.

And so in storms and calms,
High on the open heath,
The windmill's mighty arms
Decay like English teeth.

TO THOSE THAT COME AFTER

WE were not wholly here, because to you
Often from our old homes our dreams drew near:
They did not know our hearts as you shall do.
We were not wholly here.

By lonely voices calling through Time's mists,
By loves and hatreds following like bees,
By jealousies and angry journalists:
Follow our way by these.

We shall be with you in your distant time,
Shall lean towards you across many a year,
To bring you courage with a way-worn rhyme:
We were not wholly here.

IN WILD-ROSE GARDEN

AN evening like an opal,
The air one scent of may,
A nightingale beginning
To practise at his lay.

A moth along a laneway
Of air goes like a ghost,
A sense grows deeper round me
Of something near, but lost.

WAITING

I SAW a wood as wild,
As natural and as fair,
As ever enchanted a child,
As ever sheltered a hare.

And twenty miles away,
Over the rumpled downs,
The centre of London lay
With its awful cluster of towns.

Sullenly street by street,
Hungrier every year,
It comes, where there used to be wheat,
Nearer and still more near.

“Which will survive,” I sought,
“London or this?” There spoke,
As though he answered my thought,
A grey and reverend oak:

“Yes, we have heard of it:
We have known such cities of old:
We stand and we dream a bit,
And it’s weald again and the wold.”

A CALL TO THE WILD

JIMSON lives in a new
Small house where the view is shrouded
With hideous hoardings, a view
That is every year more crowded.

Every year he is vexed
With some new noise as a neighbour;
The tramlines are coming next
And the street is noisy with labour.

But one thing he sees afar,
From a window over his back-door,
Is a wood as wild as a star,
On a hill untouched by contractor.

Thither at times, forlorn,
From the clamour of things suburban
He turns, as the Arab at dawn
To Mecca inclines his turban.

And this is the curious prayer
That he prays when his heart sickens,
“Oh fox come down from your lair
And steal our chickens.”

IN A YORKSHIRE VALLEY

FAR down below the ling
Late roses flare:
Rose-willow wandering
Fills all the air.

Wayfaring up the vale
Roves a strayed breeze,
And hosts of seeds set sail
On airy seas,

Trusting to find afar
Soft earth and rain,
Where flights of wild bees are,
And flower again;

As might, beyond the blue,
With the same glory
An angel tell anew
An age-old story.

SNOW ON THE EAST WIND

A BLACK horse came to visit us,
His hooves on the hills drumming
All the way from the Caucasus,
And was three days coming.

On his back was a lady light,
And cruelly did she ride him.
He dropped dead at our doors by night
As she softly stepped from astride him.

A WORD IN SEASON

A NEW thing came and they could not see,
A new wind blew and they would not feel it.
Out of a world of wizardry,
With a scent picked up in Araby,
And a charm for the hurried mind to heal it,
And a song blown west from Arcady,
A new wind blew and they would not feel it.

Their watchers looked for a wind to blow;
And the new wind sang, and they could not hear it.
It slipped at dusk by the mean dull row
Of their narrow houses, from fields of snow
In a magical land: they were very near it
For wonderful moments, and did not know.
The new wind sang and they could not hear it.

If they had heard it, who could not hear,
If they had learned it, who would not listen,
They had seen lost fairyland near, so near,
And the tarns of elf-land shimmering clear;
They had seen those pinnacles beckon and glisten
That now will never be seen by them here;
If they had heard, but they would not listen.

THE WORM AND THE STAR

As I walked in a night of July
On hills where the foxes pass,
The stars were clear in the sky
And the glow-worms shone in the grass.

And my fancy attuned my ear
To the voice of the things of the brake;
Their tiny tones I could hear,
And I heard when a glow-worm spake

And told, in the ear of the elves,
The scorn of a worm for a star:
“They are glow-worms just as ourselves,
Only less important by far.”

AL SHALDOMIR

(A Song in a Play)

AL SHALDOMIR, Al Shaldomir,
The nightingales that guard thy ways
Cease not to give thee, after God
And after Paradise, all praise;
Thou art the theme of all their lays.

Al Shaldomir, Al Shaldomir,
My heart is ringing with thee still;
Though far away, O fairy fields,
My soul flies low by every hill
And misses not one daffodil.

Al Shaldomir, Al Shaldomir,
O mother of my roving dreams,
Blue is the night above thy spires,
And blue by myriads of streams
Paradise through thy gateway gleams.

THE SONG OF THE IRIS MARSHES

WHEN morn is bright on the mountains olden
Till dawn is lost in the blaze of day,
When morn is bright and the marshes golden,
Where shall the lost lights fade away?
And where, my love, shall we dream to-day?

Dawn is fled to the marshy hollows,
Where ghosts of stars in the dimness stray
And the water is streaked with the flash of swallows
And all through summer the iris sway.
But where, my love, shall we dream to-day?

When night is black in the iris marshes,
And noisy towns of the world's dismay
Are all forgotten as Tyre and Tarshish,
Or Tyre and Tarshish are real as they,
Then day's a mirage and dreams are day.

A BALLADE OF THE LAST NIGHT

Written for the 200th performance of "If," at the Ambassador's Theatre, October 29th, 1921.

FROM where the turquoise rivers stray
The caravans no longer go
With camels by the mountain way:
The track is all untrodden snow,
Where dawns unseen of travellers glow
Above the precipices sheer.
Harwood has purchased Debureau:
The Pass is closed on Shaldomir.

Miss Gladys Cooper long ago
Left for her Playhouse. Welladay!
Business, or Fate, would have it so.
Miss Titheradge is gone this day.
Like poet's dreams they drift away.
Ainley in Kent will disappear
And lightly with a niblick play.
The Pass is closed on Shaldomir.

The sombre Ali turneth gay,
And Winston leaner seems to grow;
Binyon will sing some other lay;
And Caine has left, and Banks also.
Sherbrook, no more Miralda's foe,
Goes hence, and we have only here
The empty trappings of a show.
The Pass is closed on Shaldomir.

L'Envoi

Trotsky! Or whosoe'er to-day
Usurps the place of princes, hear!

For good and all no man shall say —
The Pass is closed on Shaldomir.

THE STATUE

I SAW a wild bird bolder
Than it is wise to be
Light down upon a shoulder,
And all at ease was he.

It was a shape of terror;
Aye, nothing less than Man's.
Yet the bird made no error,
For all the sculptor's plans,

But rested there, the rover,
Safe with that shape alone,
Unharmed, unfrightened, over
The gentle heart of stone.

IN THE SILENCE

November 11, 1928

“Is it dead,” said the pigeons, “the city that roared about us?
For the silence puzzles and numbs.
Will the fens come back, and the fields, and the woodland places?
Will there be no more crumbs?”
Two minutes passed, and the bowed heads stirred, and the bugles
Spoke and the drums.

THE INSPIRATION

AN inspiration flew,
Hushing the evening air,
Thrilling the twilight through
With something wistful and rare.

I felt the brush of its wings
As it came sheer through space,
From the place of immortal things,
Near to this very place.

By the sudden speed of its flight
And the awe of all things near,
I knew that it brought a light
For many a weary year.

It needed nothing of us
But the mere stroke of a pen,
And I knew that the ravenous
Years could not conquer it then.

By birds hushed in their song,
By a myriad insects stilled,
It swept, travelling strong,
That its purpose might be fulfilled.

As a dog has a sudden sense
Of a strange step in the night,
So Nature grew more intense
As it felt the sweep of the flight.

And unto whom it was sent,
Silently, rapidly,
On and away it went,
For it was not for me.

THE LOST TRICK

THE light was fading away
At the Inn of Earth's End,
When Man sat down to play
At cards with his grizzly friend.

Death won trick after trick,
Till all of a sudden Man
Turned one with a flick:
"That's mine," Death began,

But, seeing he had no choice,
Let it go with a groan;
For the trick was Caruso's voice
Safe on the gramophone.

RAW MATERIAL

THE down on the uncaught wing,
The dream that will not abide,
Sheep-bells softly a-ring
In fields that horizons hide,

The glow of remembered dawns,
Dew on the spider's snare,
Light late on old lawns
Out of the fading air,

The mystery lurking just
On the other sides of trees,
Tales from books that are dust
Blown by on the breeze;

All that our ordered days
Fail to bring to our door,
Elves of the wood, and fays
Of the moonlight out on the moor;

Of these is poetry wrought,
And, when history's over,
These by hearts shall be sought,
As bees yearn to the clover.

THE QUEST

WHAT are those hills so strange that stand
Where I knew none before?
Are they the slopes of Fairyland
Above the fields of yore?

How long, how long we thought of it
As fabulous and far;
And is it now before me, lit
By light of no known star?

It may be so; I shall not ask
Of any man the way;
Those hills are far beyond our task
And, sought for, fade away.

It is enough that in the change
Of light from sun to moon
I have one moment seen that range
That will float homewards soon.

Homewards to where those towers stand,
And where the mountains rise,
That do not rest in any land,
And know none of our skies.

That is the home I travel t'wards,
Though well this truth is conned,

THE CALL

SUDDEN again
That curious heavy whiff in a London square,
Camels or strange tobacco, and out of the rain
My heart has travelled eastwards to glittering air
That floods up mightily over a golden plain
To waken cities that I would visit again.
That if I ever find its swards
My quest will lie beyond.

THE DESERTED KINGDOM

“THE King is gone,” the old man said,
As he went utterly alone
Along the ruined walls of stone,
With monkeys chattering overhead,
“The King is gone. The King is gone.

“I may not question why he chose
To reign far hence in foreign lands;
I only wait for his commands,
Contented if he ever knows
I bow not to the monkey bands.

“So I wait here and watch the gate,
As I have done through all his reign,
Lest one day he should come again,
Though all the halls are desolate
And like enough I watch in vain.

“I fear that if he come not soon
The last hinge of the gate I guard
Will rust across, and wolf and pard
Will prowl in underneath the moon,
And nothing will be left to ward.

“Already broken are the domes,
Already cracked the outer walls,
And all the lovely palace falls.
Untended are the princely homes,
Across whose sills the jungle crawls.

“The monkeys look at me and mock;
They know my King is overseas;
They deem that he has fled from these!
Whereof they boast from every rock
And chatter triumph from the trees.

“And yet I guard the gateway well,
And yet I wait for his commands,
And hope some traveller of far lands
May one day come to him and tell,
I bow not to the monkey bands.”

The Non-Fiction



Killeen Castle, Seat of the Earl and Countess of Fingall. Dunsany was having a meal with the Earl when he contracted the appendicitis that would end his life.

NOWADAYS



(Dedicated to the Poets' Club)

I WILL ask the reader to approach with me in fancy any great city. Let us suppose the open country to be already behind us, a sombre look has come upon the sky, a trodden look on the grass; the air has the look of brooding over some regrettable thing; the hoardings, always ugly, always false, often indecent, which have been with us all day into distant wolds, multiply here, and suddenly the mean streets rush on us. And how terrible is their meanness. The poorest cottager beyond in the country, the remote dweller in tents, even houseless wanderers, may turn at any moment, however hard their lot, to the hills, the wild wind, the heath, to something that is not in itself base, but is part of a scheme in which the stars themselves have part. But in a town! The night is a glare of factories, and the day an asset. And night and day they are reading, reading, reading — children and grown men always reading, whether they will or not. Reading, reading, reading, till they hardly even know that they read any longer. And what do they read? All that is basest. All the mean, cunning words of the advertiser praising his poisonous wares which no Government dare put down because they know that the power of the fraudulent cure is too great to be attacked either with safety or remunerative applause. So the poster stands unchecked, the literature of a people; stands in this den of man, the modern factory city, a record of man's ambition.

Surely as one looks at all these things one's mind is on a high, dangerous place, with the gulfs of pessimism all black beneath it. It is then that one turns to the poets. One sees the holy traditions, the cloak of Homer being passed reverently on. I hear them say that there are no poets nowadays, and I listen respectfully to that judgment whenever I hear men utter it, for it is no less awful a thing than judgment upon themselves. It means that they are all alone without an interpreter. For how can one view and understand so old a thing as life or so new and strange a thing as this varying age, so full of machinery and politics, without the help of those rare minds that look, without reeling, upon essential things?

There are only two ways of understanding life: we could do it ourselves no doubt if we had the time, but threescore years and ten are not long enough; nor is the time long enough, though one add to that span twenty or twenty-five of those extra years that the Psalmist says are all labour and sorrow. There are only two ways of understanding life: one is to find some ancient folk, some age-old peasantry, and borrow from the storehouse of their wisdom which they have had leisure to fill while wars and earthquakes troubled the thrones and citadels of kings. I never hear a nursery rhyme nor an old saying but it comes to me in this age, that trade and politics have made so sordid, like a little cool breeze into a stifling town out of some far, quiet hills. And the only other way of which I know to come at the meaning of life and the scheme of man is to turn to the poets. No man in his lifetime indeed can understand it, and I do not think that any poet would claim to or would pretend to know more than any other man; but then at moments unknown, always unexpected, there comes that clear voice in his mind, and with a feeling surely of ignorance and of awe he finds himself speaking of cities he has known and byways he has trod in lands where the desert has long since covered all, coming back again to its own, where the historian can only guess and the traveller durst not go. He speaks of things that were before cities began, and of gods that walked with him in the prime of the stars. The voice passes (like the wind in the gospel of John), and he is only a man again, with a man's humiliations.

It seems to me that in some way beyond our understanding the poet, in the depth of his experience and the wide range of his knowledge, is to be compared with the many generations of a whole people rather than with individuals; and the final product of the culture of man seems to be little more than a return to a certain simplicity that was long since.

Never, as in this time it seems to me, have we so much needed guidance from the poets; for eighty years machinery has altered and increased, changing and changing again the face of England, changing our habits, our needs, our mode of life, our thoughts, our language, and our very selves. We are very proud of it, we boast of it, we are glad that we have changed quicker than others change; and what is it all for? — where are we going? I have not seen the answers in the Press; there is no clue to it in the Palace of Westminster; they do not know in either House of Parliament.

And the poets go on writing as of old. Sometimes they write of high ethereal things that are as far from us as the gates of the dawn, like that

remote, unplaced, undated play, Yeats' *King's Threshold;* and sometimes they write about our daily affairs, as in Masefield's *Widow in Bye Street.* And in the one case I hear men and women say, "Yes, I would read poetry if only poets would write about the things that interest us, the things of our own time." And in the other case they say, "It is too sordid; a poet should not write of such sordid things." Thus they speak when the poet's mothwinged fancy flits down to the very fields that they themselves, the people of this age, have slimed and made foul with gold.

And if we do not hear them, if the fashion is to be mending oleographs that the jigsaw hath eaten and not reading poetry, whence, then, shall we get our wisdom? We are removed, so terribly removed and utterly cut off, from all the simple peoples of the earth, that it is not from them that we shall learn our destiny. He would shift his pipe in his mouth if we asked one of them, and look long in front of him before he spoke; for there is no hurry in the rural places where things have gone easily, but for winter and war, since ever the quiet folk came there far back in the story of Time; he would be silent perhaps for a while before he answered, and then would speak with an accent so unfamiliar and words so unlike those hallowed only this morning by the latest editions of the daily Press that we might find something whimsical in such a man, and smile and turn away; so may Adam and Eve, as they left the garden, have found something a little uncouth in the angel's speech. Yet it seems to me, as I watch the glare of our factories, or hear the roar of our towns and the sound going up from Progress upon her ravenous path, it seems to me that man has sailed out of his course and is steering by bad stars. And the terrible evil of it is this: that the further he goes, the harder it becomes for him to hear any voice that calls him back. I mean that this recent redundancy and elaboration of speech, of which an example is the ridiculous spectacle of modern Cabinet Ministers standing up and saying, "The answer is in the affirmative," when all they mean is "Yes" — those pompous and meaningless phrases that eke out sixpence for the needy journalist when all he had to say would fill one line at a penny; and, final horror of all, the language of the advertisement begotten of avarice and bred in America: all this so rots the mind that true and simple things come to seem false, and men no longer hear when the poet speaks. That is not the concern of the poet. It is not for him to find hearers, not for him to get wealth or ease or applause of men. It is not for him to ask why the message came to himself while other men may rest, nor even to ask whence it came,

nor for what end. It is for him to work on with that flame in the mind which is the bane and blessing of the inspired. Time will bring readers — in ten years one or two, in twenty years ten or a dozen, then in a decade a hundred, then a thousand, ten thousand in ten years more, and some day millions; and still Time goes on, nor stops because we cease to imagine his progress, and the day comes when every child on the earth has perhaps one little fancy in its mind that its forbears got from the dreams of that neglected poet, which have become the world's inheritance.

"But," they will say to me, "the poet is dead." What is that to the poet? It is not for any reward that may be put into live hands that the poet works. Who knows for whom his inspiration was sent? Who knows to what end? Perhaps to guide the kings of some far-future age; and perhaps the poet is picked out from all other men as a punishment for some sin committed in other lands long, long ago, which the stars still remember.

They think that because they do not heed the poets they are right upon the course that they have chosen, right to make money by false patriotism and poisonous bread and adulterated wine, and that the poets are wrong. But the poets are never wrong, never have erred in the history of the world, have only failed (how many times they know) to give the message, but their inspiration comes sheer from the Palace of Truth, and what they say is beautiful is so, so long as they are true to their inspiration, and what they say is damnable is already damned in heaven. They reflect what is as lakes reflect it. Can a lake reflect three trees when there are only two, or can a white bird swimming on it seem black, or a crooked branch seem straight? They cannot be wrong, for they weave their work of sincerity, beauty, and truth; and evil days are in store for those prosperous cities that turn away from these things. Let them work on; it is not for them to find readers. But when the poet comes to an age that will not heed his words, let him shake off that dust that is flesh and pass hence; let him go back whither he has come; and not in the day of judgment only shall it be better for Sodom and Gomorrah than for that age, but in its own time its own people shall eke out their own damnation — for what is it to hate poetry? It is to have no little dreams and fancies, no holy memories of golden days, to be unmoved by serene midsummer evenings or dawn over wild lands, singing or sunshine, little tales told by the fire a long while since, glow-worms and briar-rose; for of all these things and more is poetry made. It is to be cut off for ever from the fellowship of great men that are gone; to see men and women

without their haloes and the world without its glory; to miss the meaning lurking behind common things, like elves hiding in flowers; it is to beat one's hands all day against the gates of Fairyland, and to find that they are shut and the country empty and its kings gone hence.

Perhaps I have drawn something too grim a picture. Certain it is that poetry does not pay, and certain that many judge it for this reason and find poetry wanting. Yet no bad custom endures for very long or survives the laughter of posterity, and I think there are signs already of changes coming. It is not wonderful that for one or two generations (and how short are one or two generations in the long, long story of Man), it is not wonderful that for a little while we have turned Materialists: matter has been so marvellous. No record in the histories of the world shows any age in which matter has done such astounding things as in the last hundred years — that is to say, matter to the glory of matter, and matter exulting in material things. I do not think that a motor or great factory is any more wonderful than the cathedrals of England, or Notre Dame or St. Mark's, or those tremendous dreams of bygone kings that marble and granite have realised in Egypt; but matter is subservient to the spirit in these. Never before to-day has it been so great for its own sake. What will it be to-morrow? Shall we always go on toiling and blackening our sky to make machines ever more wonderful still, or shall we not turn from matter because it has failed us? It has had its turn, we have worshipped it all these many years; it has given us swiftness; Man can move now by mono-rail at a hundred miles an hour, and it is not fast enough — all the old troubles, old cares, old sicknesses keep pace with us: aye, and the new diseases and new cares too. Is it not time to turn away from it? Our triumph over matter has been matter's triumph over us, and, like a great antagonist, matter cares not that we think we have won the game that we have lost. Look at us after our triumph; look at the stunted figures of the Midlands; look at the careworn faces; look at the full and terrible asylums every year growing fuller; look at the feeble, frantic politicians trying to soothe blind, angry, inarticulate labour. Man is become so very, very wise, has so closely studied the papers; he is as wise as some old and learned professor caught in a crowd and not knowing which way to turn.

The soul is not soothed by a hundred miles an hour, the mind is not made easy in shops in Bond Street by four hundred and five hundred per cent, profits, nor yet may happiness be found for certain even by all the

wickedness of honoured and wealthy vendors of patent drugs and adulterated food. With such men as these last, money will always remain; but more and more every year I hope we may find men turning away towards simplicity and beauty, realising that though money *may* buy happiness, yet it is only a medium, while the poets have on sale in exchange for nothing those ideals, fancies, and phantasies out of which happiness is made. For not a penny is earned, not a thing done but it was to help to carry out some man's ambition to make some little fancy a little easier; and men's ambitions and men's fancies are the poet's raw material, and it is only short-sighted, unpractical millionaires that think that the stamped gold coins which they give their days in exchange for are at all an end in themselves, or that fail to see that that very happiness that they hope their money may buy is often thrown away for the sake of making that money. O all ye business men, praise ye money, for I sometimes think it is all you ever get. It may be that before we grow simpler and sincerer we may grow even worse. A substitute is yet to be found for water, as there has been for beer and salt; it is yet to be widely advertised, sold, and drunk like many another wickedness, but people must some day turn from all these things and go one by one to the camp where the good men dwell — not the poets only, but all who do work for its own sake and do it well. There are two great divisions among them, the true and the sham; I judge them by their works. In one class are all the snobs, all the pretenders, the writers of advertisements, the keepers of shops (except such as are honest), the makers of antique furniture and the buyers of it, the manufacturers of all things that are meant to look what they are not, the lovers of ugliness, not all the sinners, but all that sin meanly for the sake of gain, however honoured their stations. And in the other class are the men with spades, men near to the fields and natural like the harvests, soldiers and sailors, patriots, not politicians, common labourers, not labour-leaders, policemen, kings, and all (though happily the list is too long) who do any work well for the sake of the work, and not so as to sell it at an unjust price to the first ignorant customer. In this class are the poets. And this whole class should hold fast together to resist the false that is spreading over the world — false knowledge, false work, false food. The rough seafaring man may be ignorant of the poet, but they have the bond between them of work well done, which sets them utterly apart from the mean makers of cough-cures, and Cabinet Ministers answering in the affirmative.

And of such a class the poets should be the leaders; for of all materials for labour, dreams are the hardest, and the artificer in ideas is the chief of workers, who out of nothing will make a piece of work that may-stop a child from crying or lead nations to higher things. For what is it to be a poet? It is to see at a glance the glory of the world, to see beauty in all its forms and manifestations, to feel ugliness like a pain, to resent the wrongs of others as bitterly as one's own, to know mankind as others know single men, to know Nature as botanists know a flower, to be thought a fool, to hear at moments the clear voice of God.

Dunsany.

The Autobiographies



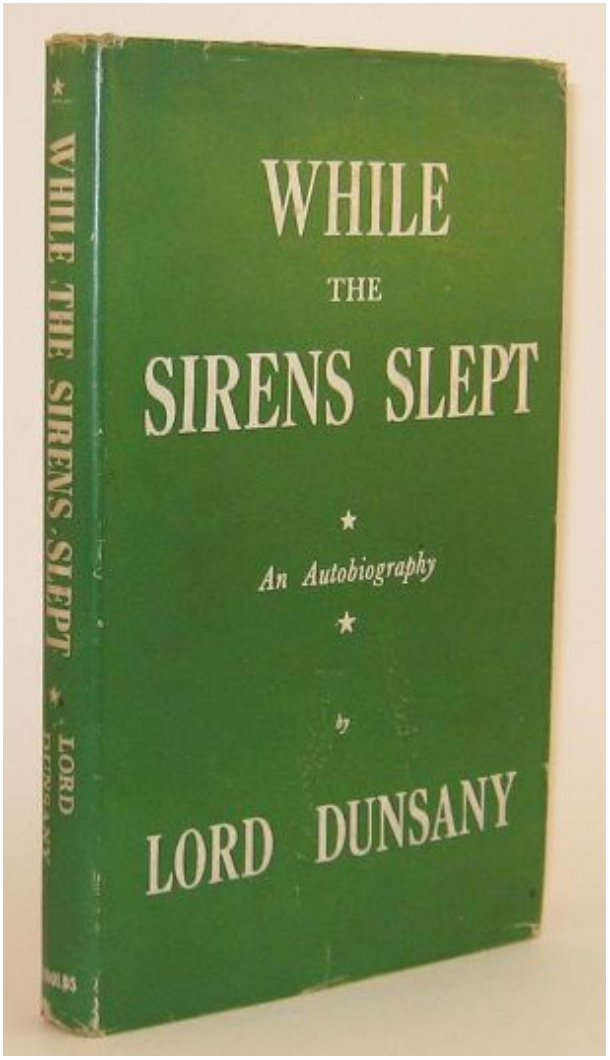
King George V Hospital, Dublin — where Dunsany recuperated following his involvement in the Irish uprising.

WHILE THE SIRENS SLEPT



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The first edition

CHAPTER I

YES, WE HAVE NO BANANAS

I WRITE OF A WORLD AND OF A TIME IN WHICH THE POSSIBILITY OF BEING without bananas was merely funny, and was a source of one of its most whimsical jokes. I write from a place in which it is easy to remember such a world, such a time and such a joke. I lived in that world; it was really true. Others too have lived in it, but few of them now have leisure to contemplate that period, calm but for a rather uneasy watchfulness towards the future, and an occasional wonder awaking to guess what might happen, too soon lulled into sleep; and many must even be doubting if such days could really have been. For them, who have not the leisure to do it for themselves, I turn to the past, to point to a few things seen when sheep-bells were commoner on the Kentish downs than sirens; as though the cover of the book that I now begin were a small door opening a very little way, to give a glimpse of skies whose travellers were mostly birds and whose clouds were all natural.

To write of oneself is to work like a goldsmith using the maximum quantity of alloy: dreams and time are the precious metals. But one cannot pass through twenty-five years without seeing something upon the way, and if my reader will pick out the things I have dreamed and seen, and forget the rest, he may be able to refine from this story some specks to keep in his memory.

Through the partly open door of which I spoke I see glimpses of nth November, 1918, when I think that a sudden thought came to everyone in England who had been too preoccupied with the thought of victory to have time for other reflections; but now victory had come and, with the need to look forward to it no longer, thoughts turned backwards and counted the cost. The rejoicing one might have expected was all absent, and a very sober mood came down upon England. I do not think any rioting need have been feared, but someone set going a rumour that the Kaiser had been seen talking to officers of the Dutch air-force. So unlikely a story must have been invented, and I suppose that the reason of the invention was to quieten a London crowd by the hint of the possibility of an air-raid even yet. And though such a reminder was useless, it was not silly, for no-one could have

foreseen the quiet and solemn mood that came down over most of London. Rows of captured guns ornamented the Mall in those days, and I remember the boastful inscriptions at one end of those guns, and the hollows worn in the gravel under the other end, which were made by boys playing see-saw. How clear those inscriptions and those hollows were, and the little heaps of gravel thrown up from the hollows; and yet the Kaiser could only see the inscription, and never dreamed of the London boys playing seesaw. This observation may seem tritely commonplace; and so it is; and yet remember that the whole of German policy denies my simple thought, that man cannot see the future: the whole of German policy is based on such careful foresight that nothing is unforeseen, and on such careful preparation that their battle is won before we wake from our sleep. I cannot feel that Hitler is a great man, but I think he is very likely the cleverest man in Europe. What a lesson for all the copy-books of the future, showing what cleverness cannot accomplish.

The great light shining before us was gone; there was no longer something for every man to strive for, and a feeling of depression succeeded the war, such as follows all exaltations. And in that depression the wings of the angel of death that had screamed for more than four years so shrilly through the air, and had sailed over us with such pomp, moved soundlessly and with no splendour amongst us, unrecorded by history, and slew more than the guns had slain, with influenza. We who had been in such places as Plugstreet Wood where this particular angel of death was bred, were partially immune and, when we got this influenza, we most of us recovered; but it went by the name of the Spanish influenza, and I imagine that the reason of this was that it was not until it left the lands that were familiar with it and blew over the Pyrennees, its deadliness became really effective. From Spain it blew over the world, devastating Indians and Eskimos, seemingly growing deadlier the further it got from home.

A few days after the Armistice the department of the War Office in which I had served for much of 1918 was disbanded, as is recorded by R. F. W. Rees, who was one of us, in a ballade that may not seem to the world so good as it did to us, and so I will only quote parts of it:

The Curtain Falls

The tabs that made my tunic look so gay,
The band around my cap, so chastely green,
The hasty knife has rudely cut away,
And khaki shows where loftier hues have been.
No more is Colvile ‘mid his bookshelves seen,
And Morton’s song of poor Ozanne is done.
Stelling no more thumps at his type machine:
The curtain falls on M.I.7.B.(I).

No longer Pollard pins upon the screen,
To praise Dunsany, his poetic lay;
Major Pollard, I may explain, was our principal satirist.
And the ballade ends with the envoi:

So, some immensely sad, some very gay,
From Street to street we go — our work is done.
Miss Wheatley’s packed the last fair screed away:
The curtain falls on M.I.7.B.(I).

We of M.I.7.B.(I) never quite forgot each other, though meetings grew fewer and fewer and then ceased, until one day in 1936 Sir Reginald Rowe invited us all to lunch with him at Lincoln’s Inn, of which he was now Under Treasurer. J. B. Morton walked in where we were all gathered, remarking “What a nasty-looking lot we are,” though he tried to tone it down by adding “compared with the smart officers that I remember.” But one can’t tone down increased girth and patches of grey hair and a bit of a stoop. It was a delightful reunion that we owed to Sir Reginald Rowe, and through it all rippled on the conversation of J. B. Morton as brightly as ever. I walked away with Ozanne and we parted at the entrance to the Tube in Trafalgar Square. Our parting was so cheery that a policeman turned and watched him as he went away down the steps. Could this cheery greeting have come from a venerable archdeacon? he evidently wondered. And Ozanne does look very venerable now; but the more venerable he looked, the more some suspicion of disguise arose in the mind of the man whose melancholy job it is to harbour suspicions. Had the old soldier flashed out in his face for a moment as we said good-bye? Probably that was what happened. And the policeman had said to himself, “An archdeacon in

gaiters, a soldier. A soldier, an archdeacon in gaiters." And could not make head or tail of it. He had started off with that little bit of insight, but he had been able to get no further, for his suspicions had led him all wrong.

When M.I.7.B.(I) was disbanded I went to the 3rd Battalion of the Inniskillings at Tregantle Fort in Cornwall, where we guarded the coast, without knowing against whom. The fort was evidently built against the French, and there were some very big guns, but they were muzzle-loaders and had been rolled down the hill, where they lay amongst the heather, imposing pieces of scrap. But however obsolete Tregantle Fort had become, it had been a real fortress, and there was a splendid air about the vast strength of my bedroom there, and I was very glad to have slept in an atmosphere that drew from those great walls something that I knew would enrich my imagination long afterwards. Later we moved to Devonport and into North Raglan Barracks, where there was very little to do and a great number of officers to do it; but it was like living in an extremely pleasant club. There Colonel McClintock retired, to everybody's regret, and was succeeded by Colonel Crawford. I remember a subaltern coming into my room there one night, long after I had gone to bed, and saying that he had been told to ask me if I had read a book called *Tales of War*. I said Yes I had. He said: "But there must be something more in it than that. Why did they tell me to ask you?"

It was a bitterly cold night and I did not want to have to get up to shut the door if he left it open. So I said: "Will you promise to shut the door if I tell you?"

"Yes, of course," he said.

"Do you swear to do it?" I asked.

And this I got him to do. Then I told him, "I wrote it."

He left hurriedly, as I thought he would when he found they had been pulling his leg; but he kept his word and shut the door.

In June 1919 I was attached for a short time to the American 3rd Army on the Rhine, first joining them in camp at Beaune, whence all the way to Dijon the most famous vineyards of France shelter under the Cote d'Or. Major George S. Heilman and Major Norton Northrop were very kind to me there, the former showing me the lovely countryside, old towns and little villages, where children were doing their lessons at tables under the lime-trees. I have a book here that he wrote about Washington Irving and gave me in 1926, which brings back memories of that time with one of its

sentences, where he says: “I remember how Lord Dunsany (at that time Captain Dunsany of the British Army) said to me as we were driving together, during the armistice period, past a cemetery in Burgundy where French soldiers lay buried, that the difficulty in building one’s life after the experience of the Great War was that the war was a brick greater than the building.” I may perhaps be pardoned for lifting lines from another man’s book when some of the words were my own; and I write them here because they express a feeling I had about the grandeur of that time, such as has now blazed out at us again, and of which the history will no doubt be worthily written but not for a hundred years.

From Beaune they sent me after a few days to Luxembourg by car, with a corporal and a private to look after the car and me, both of which they did very well. I remember the great Roman arch at Treves, but not well enough to bring it before the inner eye of my reader, which is a writer’s principal duty. Major Northrop came with me some of the way, but how far I no longer remember. We came to Metz, where I remember an American artillery officer looking rather wistfully at one of the forts, and saying to me, “That is the place I had to destroy, if the war had gone on.”

Among all the things I forget, one scene stands out in my memory still very clearly, and this was a really typical red-faced Prussian officer, unmistakable though in plain clothes, walking with two ladies, to whom he spoke with effusive gestures as our car drew near. I could not hear what he said, and I do not know Prussian, but his copious gestures with his arms and his whole body showed me clearly what he was saying, which was, “Out of the way, my dears, to let these two excellent officers pass, these most worthy gentlemen. Do not incommode them in any way by your presence.” I could not have been mistaken; that was what he was saying as he bowed and swept them out of the way, although they were never even in it. Afterwards on the Rhine I saw the same attitude everywhere. It is no doubt the correct attitude to display in time of defeat. We have not been defeated and do not know. It was surprising, but evidently correct. In Metz we enquired of some French soldiers the way to Luxembourg. They told us, and one of them asked if we could give him a lift. He stepped into our car with the most intense delight and repeated over and over again to us “*Permission*, *permission*,” evidently for fear that we might think he was deserting. And we came to that silvery land through hundreds of square miles of rye. And there we met what any child would have recognized as a

soldier, but a soldier such as has been lost to the world for many years: he was in scarlet tunic and white breeches, looking like what soldiers used to look before the modern rifle taught them to imitate mud or dry grass as closely as it could be done. Not that many a Luxembourger did not don dimmer clothes and fight for France. At Esch the Corps Commander most hospitably entertained me at his house, which was spacious enough to have been, a little while before, the headquarters of him whom the world knew as Little Willy. Later he took me to see a game with which England is now familiar, but which I had never seen before, the great American game of baseball; though I had joined in practice at Beaune in catching the ball, which I was luckily able to do easily enough, on account of its resemblance to fielding at cricket, but I should not have been able to have made any hand at pitching or striking. It occurred to me there that an English crowd watching cricket must appear very dull and stolid to the American visitor, as I heard an American major say "Well, well, well," as every ball was bowled: it was not the actual words said, but the tone of contempt with which each of them rang, that made me realize that the audience take a real part in this game.

I need hardly say I heard very interesting stories in those evenings, for one does not often have the opportunity of talk with a corps commander fresh from his recent victories. The Germans had put about some sort of propaganda implying that the Americans would deal mildly with them, and some leaflets had been issued to American troops with the object of stimulating hatred. "I put them all in the waste-paper basket," said the General. "My men didn't need to be taught to hate the Germans."

I heard a story there of coloured troops among the American forces: some of them had rested a coffee-pot on a couple of unexploded German shells and lit a fire under it to boil the coffee, and before the coffee boiled the shells had exploded. Later one of these men saw an officer warming up his coffee over a stove and rushed up saying "O Colonel, don't drink that stuff. It's already killed five men."

From Esch I went on towards the Rhine and crossed the frontier, which I recognized because all American soldiers, when asked if we were on the right road, had invariably answered *out,* and now they all said ja. We passed by a fine forest: I remember seeing a roe-deer beside the road. And we saw old castles, very nests of Bellona, their loopholes all scarred by bullets. And one cunning fellow had built all his loopholes slanting, which meant that his

neighbours had to get not only their direction exact, but also their elevation. But they seemed to have done their best. In Coblenz I was very hospitably entertained, and I was taken out on the other side of the Rhine as far as there were any American troops. The castle of Ehrenbreitstein stood on its shining precipice, and over it floated the American flag, splendid against the sky. And in those days the white ensign was to be seen on the Rhine, on little, armed motor-boats; a sight that might have been thought to be unique in history, but it will soon be seen again. By the bank of the river, I think where the two rivers join, Kaiser Wilhelm I rides on a bronze horse, with Victory running along beside him. Close to that statue I saw a young German slash at a butterfly with a cane, and miss. My imagination, stimulated perhaps by the great effigies beside me, saw something symbolical in this. One day a young German boy, of fifteen or sixteen, scowled at me. The scowl was horrible, and his face was ugly to start with, and yet I felt with relief that, after all the smirking Germans that I had seen, this was at last the right attitude. There is a pedestal in Coblenz, set up by Napoleon to commemorate the invasion of Russia in 1812. And under these carved words is another carving to say that it had been inspected in 1813 by the Russian general commanding in Coblenz, and approved.

When I got back to England I took off my uniform, and had my tonsils out next day: there was too much of Plugstreet Wood in them, and I had kept them in much too long, thinking that it would be better to have them taken out after the war, but I should have been far fitter if I had got rid of them earlier. Perhaps with depression that may have come from this source, or that may have been part of the depression I have already mentioned which troubled the whole world after its orgy, I was oppressed at my house in Kent with the thought that I might not do as much work as I felt ought to be done by anyone who had survived the war. For a poet can no more make ideas than an entomologist can make butterflies; he can only wait for the idea, and try to catch it if it comes. I read in a paper of a clergyman who had said: “It is a great responsibility to have survived the war.” And I cut out these stirring words and pasted them into a blank book in which I hoped to write. Luckily the ideas came; slowly at first, but with a rush when I wrote my play *IF,* which I did in eight days, all except one scene which I added, in two days, later, on the advice of Mr. Arthur Hopkins of New York. I find that a play moves quicker than anything else one writes, because the characters seem almost to speak to one, and much of it therefore goes with

the speed of dictation. Of course a play must move forward all the time to the height of some great event or the deep of some catastrophe: in some of the other arts it may loiter by the way, but not in the drama. I think there is a tendency nowadays to write dialogue for the sake of dialogue, which is like making a road for the sake of mud or stone, not leading anywhere in particular. This is a digression, so let me return to the topic with which the chapter began: only the other day Miss Mary Lavin told me that she saw a small boy being hurried across a Dublin street, at considerable risk through the traffic, up to a shop-window, to be shown a dozen bananas (at ninepence each). “That’s them,” he was told.

CHAPTER II

A HUMAN BARNUM

EARLY IN OCTOBER, 1919, WE WENT TO AMERICA, AS MR. POND, OF THE lecture agency known as the Pond Lyceum Bureau, had asked me to give lectures. Later on, one day in his office, I said to him, "How did you know, when you first asked me to come, that I could speak in public at all?"

"O, of course I knew," he said.

"Yes," I replied. "But how?"

And then he blurted out the bare truth. "Well, as a matter of fact it didn't matter," he said. "They are interested in certain people and want to see them, it doesn't matter what they talk about."

And about that time he went to the telephone to speak to an applicant to give lectures about deep-sea-diving and I heard him saying, "No *topic* is of interest, only the lecturer."

That people in America should have been interested in my work was due in the first place entirely to Miss Lewisohn, who put on my *Night at an Inn* at the Neighbourhood Playhouse in 1916, and in the second place to Mr. Stuart Walker, who took several of my plays through the States with his Portmanteau Theatre. I was always most grateful for this interest, and my gratitude will continue, perhaps longer than they will remember me, to those hospitable Americans who entertained me and my dreams. I have read many dramatic criticisms, but the one I appreciate most, because it was the most certainly genuine, was one of which a lady told me one day in New York: at the first performance of *A Night at an Inn* at the Neighbourhood Playhouse the dramatic critic of a New York paper leaned forward from behind and gripped both her shoulders, and, as the sailors made their exits, he dug his nails in.

We went to America from Le Havre in *La France.* For three consecutive days the captain recorded "ouragan" on the log that was pinned up in a gangway. One day it occurred to me that, when the sun set behind water, it must shine for a moment through the top of the water. I looked for this, and sure enough it did. I saw the top part of the sun, perhaps a tenth of its surface, shine the colour of an aquamarine or a pale emerald. Since then people have written to the papers about it, but I had not heard of anyone

noticing it before, though I lately heard that the Arabs notice it in the desert, and have done so long enough to have a legend about it: this would seem to disprove my theory which first made me look for it, for it cannot shine through sand; perhaps it shines through mirage. People who speak of it now always call it the green ray; but it is not the least like a ray. In the Mediterranean in 1929, the captain of the ship, with two ladies, came by me just after sunset saying, "Well, that settles it. There is no green ray to be seen."

But I had just seen it clearly. One should not look at the sun as it sets, because that affects the sight and merely makes everything look green: one should turn away and look back at the right moment, if one can judge it, and on a calm and clear day this strange sight should be easily witnessed. In 1940 off the West coast of Africa I said to some ladies of the M.T.C., "Would you like to see the sun turn green."

They were kind enough not to think me crazy, and came and looked, and the sun was obliging that day and turned green.

La France was late in New York harbour, and I was unable to give the lecture that I was booked to give on that day in a large hall in New York. Interviewers met me at the docks, and later they queued up in the corridor outside our sitting-room in a hotel. Refreshed by my journey I was anxious to give my best to the people who wished to hear me lecture; but, with the lecture postponed, the interviewers got it for the next few days. It must be remembered that I was a new writer, so new that I don't remember that anyone in England or Ireland as yet allowed me to be a writer at all; and the American people are very up-to-date, and like to be in touch with what is going on now; so that they appreciate some things that England sometimes leaves posterity to bother about. Whatever the reason was, I was given a great welcome, and a very warm welcome, and, what I particularly appreciated, all the people who talked to me about my work seemed to like in it those things that I knew myself were the best, although I had not previously dared to talk about them. And the welcome was intensified by the radiance of the air of New York, which is as inspiring as any I know. I saw all the interviewers who wished to see me, and answered all the questions they asked; for it would have been silly, as well as impolite, to have undertaken to appear in public to give lectures and yet to be too coy to be interviewed. The interviewers were pleasant and friendly to me, so I supplied them so far as I could with whatever information they wanted,

with one exception much later in Omaha, when some perhaps mistaken sense of humour perversely tempted me, though answering all the questions of the two interviewers who called on me there, to withhold one piece of information which I perceived they did not possess, which was who I was or what I did. But in New York and elsewhere they seemed to know, and in New Orleans an interviewer wittily introduced himself to me with the words "I am Fame," which was in allusion to a play of mine called *Fame and the Poet,* in which Fame appearing in person dressed like a Greek goddess asks all the most trivial questions that could be found in a "personal par." It was thought in America that I had written that play after having become acquainted with this lady, but I wrote it before I ever heard even the faintest toot of her trumpet.

One of the interviewers, a lady, told me that when she went to a play of mine called *The Gods of the Mountain* she noticed a fat man sitting next to her, and at the climax of the play she reached out and gripped his hand. He patted hers and said, "It's all right, it's all right," like that.

"When the lights went up again and it was all over," she said, "I daren't look him in the face."

And another of the interviewers was Mr. C. Vanderbilt, for no-one in America possesses enough to obviate the duty of earning a living. And Mr. Bierstadt called, who, having written a book about me, which had been published in America, may have been interested in seeing what I looked like.

After a few days I gave a lecture in the Æolian Hall. Perhaps it was worth while to be without readers for a long time, to meet them so suddenly as this. In what calling, besides the callings of those that follow the arts, does anyone work for say fifteen years before his neighbours know that he is a qualified practitioner of the particular calling that he has chosen? But this is an irrelevant enquiry; for the only thing that matters is the work a man does, and it is not by any means certain that recognition is good for it; and I think it is certain that too much recognition would be distinctly bad: certainly nobody would work hard for very long while being fêted in the crisp bright air of New York.

As there is by no means space to describe all the kind people we met in New York I might be expected here to write something of a typical New Yorker; but this I find quite impossible, for most of the people we met had strong personalities, and it would be as hard to sketch one type that they all

resembled as it would be, among inanimate things, to describe some solid object that had most of the qualities of a diamond, a rocket, a waterfall and a gun. The least typical was perhaps Mr. Chanler, who entertained us at lunch. Imagine an artist surrounded by macaws, his artistic temperament multiplied by the vigorous air of New York, in a fine house among his friends, rising often to drink our health, and enforcing all his points by waving a carving-knife over the heads of his guests, who evidently knew and loved him too well to fear murder. Imagine his ringing voice delighting the macaws till they screamed, and you still have a poor sketch of Robert Chanler.

And I saw a great deal of another artist, Mr. Orlando Rouland, and Mrs. Rouland, great friends of Stuart Walker. Orlando Rouland painted my portrait, and I sat to him whenever I could find time. He got a very good likeness. But I will not attempt to describe all the interesting people I met in New York or to give a mere list of their names without due description: some of them, such as Madame Yvette Guilbert, Miss Ethel Barrymore and Witter Bynner, the world knows well already. Mr. Pond, whom I always looked on as holding a position among the human race similar to what the late Mr. Barnum held in the animal world, had placed me in charge of Mr. Williams, who was to go round on my long journey with me.' Blasco Ibanez was being exhibited by Mr. Pond at the same time that I was, and, just as in the circus, when the day's work is over, the man in charge of the bear will talk over and compare his difficulties with the one who looks after the elephant, Mr. Williams had gone round to have a talk with the man who was in charge of Ibanez. I thought he left me a little depressed, for all of us who are exhibited anywhere have something of the artistic temperament, but he came back delighted. He had probably begun by mentioning a few little difficulties that he may have had with me, but then the other man began to talk, and for the rest of the time, Williams had listened in wonder to what the real artistic temperament could do, and how Ibanez, whenever in the least annoyed, used to hurl his hat to the ground and then jump on it. This was especially the case when someone unwisely told him the story of two New-Yorkers looking in at a shop-window, where copies of *Mare Nostrum* were displayed, the successor to the famous book *The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse;* and one of them had said to the other: "That dago has written another horse book." Williams came back to me openly admitting that he had a comparatively easy job; and I don't think anything ever

occurred on our trip that was able to ruffle a man fortified with the memory of the hat of Blasco Ibanez. Mr. Pond in his reminiscences tells how in a room heated beyond anything I was accustomed to, I poured some water over my head. I do not think the story is true, though that I can't remember, but what a poor bit of work compared with dancing upon one's hat.

CHAPTER III

THE VETO

IT IS SAD TO TURN FOR THE PURPOSES OF THESE MEMORIES TO OLD ENGAGEMENT-lists over which almost a quarter of a century has gone: so many names are of those I know to be dead, and there are others from whom I have not heard for so long, that I fear that many of them may have gone the same way. Seeing the name of Mrs. Douglas Robinson, President Theodore Roosevelt's sister, started this mournful reflection: for though I met many very kind and charming people, I think that none of them were more charming than she.

On 16th October, the day of my first lecture, Miss Lewisohn called for my wife and me and took us to the Neighbourhood Playhouse, where they had kindly put on for us my *Night At An Inn*, and my *Queen's Enemies. The Queen's Enemies* was the first to come on, and it was well acted, with Miss Lewisohn in the principal part. I much preferred this play to *A Night At An Inn,* and never put any of my eastern plays, with their gods and their kings, in the same class as those that I had placed in tile Western hemisphere and in this century, perhaps feeling that my fancy had more room to build splendours when far removed from all our conventions and pavements. But I had something to learn, and I found that the actors of the Neighbourhood Playhouse were able to awe a full house with *A Night At An Inn.* I had to make a speech when it was over. I forget what I said, and so, I expect, does everyone else. But they will remember the play.

It is much preferable to write of pleasant things, and here in New York, of all places, there was abundance of such material of which to write; and yet I do not think a man should follow any calling without attempting to do something for the art or the cause that he serves, and I feel that I ought to record an obstacle to the modern drama that I have observed, and that must do harm to it. Naturally those that get their living from the drama and provide a living for thousands have some organization, and there are of course more organizations in the world than it knows of, but such an organization should never be used against the interests of the drama itself, which after all is the fountainhead of all theatres. Now, this organization is able to veto any play, even after it has been accepted and partly paid for by

a manager. Such a power should only be used sparingly, and for a serious reason. When I met with it it was used for a trivial reason, and even mistakenly. The reason, so far as I could make out, was that, seeing my plays going in America and unknown in England, and not realizing that England could not give attention to plays while civilization itself was threatened, as it is again to-day, I wrote to Stuart Walker complaining rather petulantly about it, and saying on the strength of seeing a rather sordid pantomime in Londonderry that some managers allowed indecent jokes. Stuart Walker was very anxious to have exclusive rights over some more of my plays for his small theatre, especially a long one, and I owe him so much that I never criticized him while he was alive, and will not do so now that he is dead. But he did take out that one sentence from my letter, and had it published in the English papers in the spring of 1919. A hint that somebody gave me caused me to guess that one particular manager, whom I had never seen then or since, had taken my petulant remark as applying to himself. But whether it was he or others, my plays were barred from the stage, and have been ever since, with the exception of *IF,* which was put on soon after and was, I think, not expected to have enough chance of success to be worth vetoing. But it did succeed, after which its further progress was vetoed.

I do not complain of the veto, but that it can be too lightly used, and that it was so used against my plays. Proof is usually a tedious thing, but I cannot say what I have said of a force that could be used against the drama, as well as occasionally for it, without giving some proofs. First of all, then, I read a comedy or farce in 1922 to one of the biggest managers in England: he accepted it right away, in the presence of a friend of his and a friend of mine. I said, "But do not let me rush you. You might like to show it to someone else first."

He said: "No-one ever did that. I back my own judgement."

And he did back it, to the extent of £400, advanced on account of royalties.

But the play never came on. He did not pay that £400 merely to hear me read the play.

I had a similar experience with a tragedy that an American manager took, though he paid me a smaller sum. And with the same play with another English manager, who lost his money in the same way. This manager was ecstatic about the play, and acted in it himself when it got as far as being

tried out in the provinces for a week, and succeeded well, but it got no further.

Another play of mine was put on at the Malvern Festival in 1938 with other plays, and made a hit, but it was the only one of those plays that never went on to London.

Perhaps these proofs are enough, though I have more.

I never explained to the manager whom Stuart Walker goaded that I had intended no slight to him and did not even know him, or took any other steps whatever. I always looked on the job of offering plays, or books, to managers or to publishers, and touting them successfully, as being work that might occupy a lifetime if done thoroughly, and I decided long ago that one could not do the two things, write one's best work, and go round explaining to people that it was good, or trying to make them believe so. Therefore when I have written a play or a book and had it typed, and offered to one or two people, I go on to write another book, which I should not have leisure to do if I spent all my time on the fortunes of the other. These fortunes are not really the writer's concern: the staging and the acting of a play are other men's jobs, and a man can only do his own. I only write this at all, because the organization in question is hitting the wrong people, those who might enjoy a play as they enjoyed *IF,* if they had a less trammelled chance; doubly the wrong people, because the person aimed at had never felt, or intended to express, any ill-will to them at all.

CHAPTER IV

IN PRISON

ON 17TH OCTOBER, THE DAY AFTER SEEING MY PLAYS AT THE NEIGHBOUR- hood Theatre, we left New York. But I cannot close my visit to that city without some reference to William Beebe, the traveller and scientist, who was one of the very many pleasant people that I first met there. His travels have been mainly in three directions, laterally to Galapagos and along the Himalayas, upwards, flying in the first Great War, and downwards in a diving-bell to see strange fishes, shining in the black darkness, deeper than a man had ever gone before. I don't know what he is doing now; there does not seem to be very much new for him to do. I need not, indeed I may not, describe any of these journeys of his, for they are in his own books, the largest of which tells, in four volumes, of his hunt of the pheasant round the world; not *a* pheasant, but *the* pheasant and its entire family, to its most remote relations, such as the partridge and the barndoor fowl. It had been his occasional habit in some of his most scientific passages to allude to one of my small gods, or to quote the words of some of my most imaginary prophets. I do not know if science becomes more scientific for being thus contrasted with a bit of pure imagination, as a light in a picture becomes brighter for the presence of a dark shadow, but the effect must certainly be surprising to scientific readers, and the surprise may stimulate their researches. Some while later I remember his making what I think was the most surprising remark I ever heard in conversation: another scientist was talking about dividing the atom, which nobody else had as yet cut into slices, and was explaining that the energy that was released when this was accomplished might be very violent. "Now I know," said Beebe, "what causes novas. It's people like you interfering with the atom."

A nova, I may explain, is the wreck of a solar system, such as sometimes flares for a few nights in our skies. He showed us over the Natural History Museum of which he was the curator, but a description of this extremely interesting museum may perhaps be left to his pen.

We went on to Northampton, a little town much haunted by the legends of Indians, and I gave a lecture to the girls of Smith College. There we were entertained hospitably, a word I need no longer use while recording these

memories, for we met with hospitality everywhere. Years afterwards, when we were showing our gardens here, which is to say at Dunsany, in County Meath, in aid of a fund for nurses, I saw an American lady wandering round, and asked her to come in and have some tea, explaining that I was in debt for far more hospitality to Americans than I should ever be able to pay, and that I was always glad of any opportunity to make little repayments on account. To which she replied: "I guess that somebody's bread upon the waters is coming back cakes to me."

I am afraid they were very small cakes in return for the abundant bread which I do no more than faintly indicate here.

A writer's friends, if he has any, are necessarily widely scattered, both through space and through time: those that are scattered at all far through time he can of course never entirely meet; a few of those that are divided from him only by space he may haply overtake. One of these was Mr. Rogers MacVeagh, who had written to me before America came into the war and afterwards when it and he had gone to fight, and he had afterwards visited us here. He now brought us to visit his father and mother at Fasnacloich, near Dublin in New Hampshire. The maples at that time of year were scarcely a subject for prose. Each tree was like the flame of an explosion. There are such colours in the sky at sunset and dawn, but I do not know what other leaves can equal the glory of the maple in the fall. And there were apples there as red as any that I have seen in our islands and larger than any that grow here. Round Fasnacloich lay woods of that loveliest of trees, the birch, and over them lifted up the grave head of Monadnock. Here Mr and Mrs. MacVeagh sheltered us, letting no-one know that travellers from another hemisphere were amongst them, for they knew well enough what kind of life was led by the exhibits of Barnum or Pond, and a little quiet after the excitement of New York's great hospitality was much appreciated by us, and was even necessary. Here we played tennis with Rogers MacVeagh and his brother, and walked in the woods and talked with their dogs, and in the evening listened to the crickets chirping, and played chess with Mr. MacVeagh.

Two days later we left by car on a five-hours journey, to meet a very remarkable man. A little snow fell, giving even an added light to the maples, and we lunched in a wood on the way. The man we were to meet was Governor Osborne, the governor of the Portsmouth Naval Prison, who had invented a new system for prisons, interesting enough in itself, but the

really remarkable thing about it was that he had imposed it on a whole prison by the force of his personality, and it worked. A man does not impose new systems upon others without having first convinced himself, and the steps that Osborne took to understand his subject before he laid down the law about it were strangely rigorous. He had been appointed chairman of a State Commission on prison reform, and decided then that, in order to understand the subject properly, he would spend a week as a convict. So he had himself sent to prison, with instructions that he was to be treated in every way like any other prisoner, and, not content even with that, he contrived to spend twenty-four hours of it in one of the terrible punishment-cells. The story of that week is told in his book *Within Prison Walls,* published by Appleton & Company in 1917. Some men travel to find new fauna and flora, but what more interesting fauna could one find than remarkable men and women? And Governor Osborne was one of those whose memory illuminates for me my travels in America. When we arrived at Portsmouth, Maine, the Governor took us to a big hall in the prison, where we sat in the gallery while prisoners acted my play *Fame and the Poet.* The whole of the inmates of the prison sat in the hall, with warders standing at the end of each row; but the warders were all prisoners themselves, on their honour, and carrying out Governor Osborne's remarkable system, which was to trust the prisoners; and while he lived the system worked, though I imagine that there were needed his energy and his personality, and the respect that the prisoners had for him, in order that such a system should work successfully. One of the actors in my play was an ex-convict who had come back to help his old mates to make a success of the play, which their acting certainly made of it. When it was over I had to make a speech to the mixed assembly, and was chiefly guided by realizing that I stood near a precipice of bathos over which a patronizing air would certainly hurry a speaker. So, anxiously avoiding all the platitudes whose rank growth marked the edge of the dismal precipice, I told them that, life being made equally of sun and shadow, and nights being needed as well as days to mellow the orchards, nobody should regret any experience. As I did not expect to have to speak, I have no record of what I said, but I heard afterwards that the governor had my speech printed and a copy was given to each prisoner. I think that the phrase about the shadows went through the underworld, because many years later a book about O. Henry in prison, written by a fellow-prisoner, was named *With O. Henry in the Shadows.*

What a master that was! What countries in the world can produce short stories to compete against England, America, Russia and France, who can put into the field Kipling, O. Henry, Turganev and de Maupassant, not to mention Edgar Allan Poe and Balzac, if his stories may be considered short, and several other Russians.

We had no time to wait at Portsmouth, for, once we left the shelter of Fasnacloich, our programme was as full as ever, and I had to lecture that evening at Boston eighty miles away. On we went past woods of birch and maple, with the sumach flaming beneath them, while with a deeper red glowed a large-leaved American oak. At Boston in a big hall called the Copley Plaza the chair was taken for me by Mr. Baker, lecturer on the drama at Harvard, for every American university studies the drama, and I think it is very right that they should, for what were the nine muses but a glorified, and indeed glorious, attempt by the Greeks to divide up and personify the higher parts of the mind? And it seems to me that anyone lacking all knowledge of the affairs of one of those muses may be said to be no better off than anyone is physically who has lost one of his fingers or toes. There Mr. Ellery Sedgewick, editor of the *Atlantic Monthly,* entertained us in what, as I said there was one word that I would not use here again, I may call the American way.

Next day we had to go on again, for I was to speak at Brooklyn. Those who know the mighty bridge that connects Brooklyn with the mainland will appreciate the story told me some while afterwards by an American lady, especially if they understand the category in which the quick-witted urban American people are inclined to place farmers. She had been shown over an American prison, engaged on some good work, when she saw a prisoner who evidently had the power to inspire all the others with merriment whenever they came near him. “Who is that interesting man?” she asked.

“O he is a very bad man,” said the warder. “He sold Brooklyn Bridge to a farmer.”

Next day the Roulands and Stuart Walker drove us to the Yama Farms in the Adirondack Mountains. I remember cottages there with only one or two rooms, but each room designed with as much charm as any that you would find in big houses. We slept on the verandah of one of these cottages in the woods; and the woods of the Adirondacks in the fall are vistas of extraordinary beauty. All through these woods we went on next day to stay at Castle Rock, the delightful house of Professor and Mrs. Osborne, where

one looked down from a height on the distant lights of West Point. At this delightful place we could only stay one night, for I had to go back to New York to give another lecture, and on again next day to Philadelphia, to stay at Bryn Mawr with Miss Helen Taft, the principal of the college. I have an old scrap of paper to this day on which I had jotted down notes for my lecture there. As they express some things that I feel, I will repeat them here, rough as they are, for should anyone honour me by reading this book they may find it of more interest to know what I think than to read the names of places I visited. So here they are:

(1) — Decent things and fine minds re-act.

(2) — Art is any work supremely well done.

(3) — An ideal is a mould into which *all* your experience will fit.

(4) — I never knew a good thing that was not beautiful, or a mean thing that was not ugly.

These were only notes, guides to direct my talking. I will not expand them there, for the reader of a book about a man's wanderings through 12 years is not looking to read a lecture. There was a reception after the lecture, and I settled down after that to an activity well-known to lecturers, that of writing autographs.

I went on to Washington, which has an air as though its architects had drawn some inspiration from the Greece of the days of Euripides. I was shown the superb Masonic Temple, and the beautiful Pan-American building, where the Presidents of all American republics meet in the cause of peace, and I saw one fourteenth of the cathedral. I came to a small house that had been named after one of my stories, and called on it, but found nobody at home. So, having no card, I wrote my name on the wall. I was driven through the wooded park, and along the side of the Potomac, which was lined for a great distance with cherry trees which the Mikado had presented to the people of the United States.

It was nice of him.

CHAPTER V

THE FOREST PRIMEVAL

WE RETURNED TO THE INTENSE HOSPITALITY OF NEW YORK, FOR WHICH

I could give in exchange no more than speeches and lectures. I felt that there could never be an adequate return for so much kindness. A work of art may have a value beyond what we can assess with our finite measurements, but lectures were only talking about art. There is however in the United States an interest in the arts that extends to a fervent curiosity as to whence they came, and out of what materials and chances each work of art arose. The last of the Indians was conquered, and many great railways laid down, within living memory: now come the things that leisure and peace can provide, and perhaps there is an eagerness about these things in America such as there was for painting in Italy when Cimabue was young. I did what I could to satisfy any speculation that these kind people might feel about the dreams and fancies from which I quarried my plays, but I was very conscious that the essential thing about a work of art is what for convenience is called inspiration, and that of the origin of this I knew nothing. I have begun to think latterly that the splendours of the imagination, which in those days too brightly dazzled me for me to think of attempting to trace them, come all from our old earth. I seem to see this now in occasional glimpses, whether I read the old poets or turn over pages on which I have written myself; but I did not know it then. Had I known it, I would never have let anything prevent me from seeing Niagara, somewhere near which my wanderings took me, but at that time I did not know that my imagination had any need of sustenance. Blake says that in the beat of a pulse a poet's work is begun and ended. And I think I understand him, which one cannot always do with Blake. I think he means that it is the flash of this inspiration that is a poet's work and nothing else, and that the finding of the rhymes and getting the idea down on to paper is mere manual labour. Somewhere Shelley says, though I do not remember where, that, between the poet's idea of his poem and the lines when written, there is the same resemblance that have the ridges that a wave makes on the sand to the wave which made them when it danced in the sunlight. So Shelley may have felt

somewhat as Blake towards that enigma of which we know nothing, the source of the vision which makes a work of art, which I sometimes tried to explain to men and women who wanted to know, though knowing no more than they did.

I was shown over the Bush Building by the architect who built it, and met the man from whom it is named. Nobody can deny admiration to these great buildings of New York. They have some of the grace that comes from every fulfilled purpose. They stand; and no building stands to the height of the Great Pyramid, whether upon a base of four acres as in Egypt, or on a square of forty yards or so as in New York, without sound plans and labour far beyond the knowledge of most of us. I had an experience with which lecturers will sympathize. I was invited to meet the Poetry Society, without knowing that the usual lecture would be expected of me; on arrival I was told that it would be, and as I was told this I heard the sound of applause from the next room; I went in and found that somebody on the platform had been telling the audience that I was about to speak, and the applause was the ordinary greeting with which lecturers are usually cheered as they rise from their seats. I had not even time to take my seat, but had to collect my thoughts and start straight away; or rather I started straight away and gradually the thoughts came. On other occasions I had a promise from Mr. Pond that I should always be given ten minutes by myself before every lecture, for I was very conscious of the obligation to give my best to the people that took the trouble to come to hear me. Yet very often two or three people would be introduced to me in that last ten minutes and, if I talked to them all the time, many of my best ideas and phrases would go to those two or three instead of to a large audience; and if, thinking of my duty to that audience, I did not talk much to the two or three, I fear I may have given offence, which is the last thing I should have wished to do to this kindly people. But I am afraid I must often have done so, for I was much obsessed with the need to concentrate on giving my best to my audience, and when I was in America nine years later I heard the German philosopher, Hermann Keyserling, much abused, mainly for having adopted an attitude towards his lectures that I could not help recognizing as being somewhat like mine, though he was a bit more violent about it, if a tale that I heard was true, which told how just before one of his lectures somebody said to him: “Won’t you come into the next room; there are some very worth-while

people there." And Keyserling had replied: "If God himself were in that room, I would not go into it now."

Of course one could write out a lecture and read it to them, or learn one and repeat it by heart, day after day; but it would lack spontaneity, and I think that the audiences themselves prefer the other kind.

At the end of October I went to Newhaven and was kindly entertained by Professor and Mrs. Andrews at Yale, where I lectured and autographed, and afterwards went to the "Elizabethan Club," where we talked the evening away. That is a pleasant time for a lecturer; all minds are a little worked up, and one can discuss anything, without feeling that, if the discussion and the late hour should tire one, one is in any way defrauding a waiting audience by taking the edge off one's best: nothing waits then but bed, and when the discussion warms and interest increases, it can wait as long as it likes.

Next morning I went back to New York and on to Indianapolis, sleeping in the train, and woke to see Indian corn and brown pigs in bright sunshine. It is always an interesting experience to wake in bed in a train and to pull up the blind in the morning, perhaps especially when one is travelling south, for the sunlight, and the flowers and fruits that it grows, have more surprises for one when travelling in that direction: the sight of the strange country seen suddenly through the window is like waking into bright dreams, instead of their fading behind one.

At Indianapolis I spent the night, after the usual lecture and reading some of my tales, and went on next morning to lecture at Cincinnati, There I met the remarkable Mrs. Longworth, daughter of President Theodore Roosevelt, whose bright energy would have felt impatient in any motor-car whose speed was like anything I had ever known as yet, and we went through Cincinnati with some of the speed and brilliance of a comet, the brilliancy being supplied by the personality of Mrs. Longworth. With her I met a lady who told me that she had had a very serious operation, and three of my green gods (though there were actually seven in the play) strode over the hills to her while under the anaesthetic and said, "You are going to get well." When the doctor afterwards asked her how she felt, she said "I am going to recover. The gods told me." But he thought her mind had gone.

No writer ever finds recognition without somebody telling him on the way that he is writing all wrong, and perhaps telling it him with increased vigour when the recognition has come; but no amount of such remarks, nor multiplication of them by any number, can make a minus quantity equal to

the positive sum of pleasure a writer gains from knowing that any work that he has done can be of that much use, even to one person. Next day Williams and I left Cincinnati in the evening. Lady Dunsany had not come with me on this long journey, but was staying with Mrs. Coonley Ward at Wyoming in New York State. Again I woke to a new land out of the window, with bright sunlight upon hills and woods; and we came through Alabama. Next morning when I pulled up the blind we were in a strange forest where white trees stood in marshes bearded with moss. It made me think of Longfellow's forest far from there:

This is the forest primeval, the murmuring pines and the hemlocks Stand like harpers hoar, their long grey beards on their bosoms, and of forests that I had seen in equatorial Africa where trees were also bearded like old men. And so we came to New Orleans. Long avenues ran out from it full of gardens, with huge butterflies floating above bright flowers, and frogs or crickets chirruped all the day long. It seemed to me that the warmth of the welcome with which America received a stranger increased with the warmth of the sun, and that here at the mouth of the Mississippi kindness flashed out as intensely as the flowers and butterflies shone.

CHAPTER VI

OLD MAN RIVER

FOR AN HOUR WE WENT THROUGH THE LOUISIANA SWAMP, AMONG GREY- bearded trees. Williams, who had travelled a good deal in peace and war, regaled me with many stories: one was of an Australian soldier who, lying by the roadside in Paris on nth November, 1918, somewhat overcome by the armistice, awoke to find a French colonel pouring champagne down his throat through a funnel. Before offering this tale to my readers I should have bound him by oath to assure me that it was true; but I neglected to do so. Another of his tales was of walking along a trench with another officer, when a shell was heard coming; the other man threw himself down, knocking over Williams and falling on top of him. The man on top was wounded, which meant he would soon be in England "Damn you," said Williams; "that was mine."

We arrived at St. Louis for breakfast, though the usual interviewers and photographers that wait for all such travellers, had to be seen first. After my lecture I dined with the Artists Guild in a crypt that they had. At dinner a lady asked me if I would not write a play about monks, because it could be acted so well in their crypt. Statements affecting any views I may have about any of the arts are liable to awake argument in me, not that I have many, being inclined to let the work get on unhindered by theories, or guided by theories that may be felt but were never put into words: perhaps my principal interest in theories about the arts is in attacking such as are erected as obstacles to free work. At any rate the remark stirred argument in me and I explained at more length than was necessary that one did not write a play to suit any one particular theatre nor for any particular occasion, but for some quite different reason. But very soon I began to wonder what one would do if one did have to write a play for a crypt about monks; and an idea came and I started on it before going to bed. Next morning we left St. Louis, arriving at Chicago at 5 p m., and by 4 p m. I had finished the one-act play about monks, which I called *A Good Bargain,* and which was duly acted in the crypt next January.

That evening I was on again and, waking next morning, I looked out on snow. At Minneapolis I got out of the train, which kept its own atmosphere,

still remembering the palms and huge flowers and butterflies of New Orleans, till the cold gripped me like a mighty hand. I was still by the same river by which frogs had croaked and butterflies floated; but here it was frozen over. Major Northrop, now a Professor, met us at the station and drove us up to his house. Metal in Minneapolis had that sticky feeling that I had noticed years before when tobogganing in the Alps; that is to say the moisture on your hand instantly froze if you touched it, and the ice acted like gum. There are two cities here, one on each side of the river, the other being St. Paul, and so we stayed two nights instead of only one. And on the morning of the third day our kind host drove us back to the station, and we crossed prairies in the train and came to that great city of farmers, Omaha, and went on to Grinnell, where I spoke in the University, in which the poorer undergraduates worked their way as waiters. On again through the prairies, and came back to Chicago. They gave me a very kindly welcome there. Next day I was shown over some of their great buildings and was taken to see a puppet-show for the first time. The puppets were only a foot high, but illusion made them appear life-size, and the words were beautifully read. They were doing my *Tents of the Arabs*. Having to make a speech afterwards l naturally expressed my pleasure at the very fine performance by praising the puppets and, as even exaggerated praise is not out of place on such an occasion, I regretted that no puppet had ever been knighted, as successful actors were in our country. This remark was taken up by somebody running the tour of Sir Johnston Forbes-Robertson, who chanced to be in the neighbourhood, as being a slight to him, by suggesting that puppets were as good as he was. I never knew what view he took himself of this rather fanciful bit of publicity, for when in after years I became a great friend of his brother Norman, as well as a friend of himself, he never made any mention of the incident. Poor Norman Forbes made the deadly mistake that is often made by children, of thinking that when a motor has gone by in a country road there will not be another, and was killed by a following motor, somewhere I think in Cornwall. Lady Dunsany joined me in Chicago. Among many hospitalities in Chicago I was entertained by the Cliff-dwellers Club, a very pleasant occasion which I clearly remember yet. From Chicago we went to Hillside, Mrs. Coonley Ward’s house at Wyoming, New York State. I should not like to suggest that America will ever be untrue to the creed that all men are born equal, or that emperors or dictators should ever arise there, but certainly all the qualities

of a benevolent despot were in Mrs. Coonley Ward, and if some of them came out in one of her descendants it seems to me that there might be some danger of his instituting a rule by divine right. At the same time she took a passionate interest in democracy. All this I rather gathered from my wife's descriptions of Mrs. Coonley Ward ruling her household, for she saw more of her than I did. But perhaps my wife was more struck with her benevolence than her despotism, and certainly they became very great friends, as I was reminded the other day, looking at a book that Mrs. Ward had given my wife, in which she had written: "To Lady Dunsany — beloved of every one beneath our roof. A lovelier guest has never entered this dear home." It was a book of verses for children, written by herself. Mrs. Coonley Ward gave me a very rare crystal, and an opal carved like an arrowhead, for she overflowed with generosity. For each of these crystals I wrote a story, as Mrs. Ward probably intended that I should, and on Thanksgiving Day I had to read the tales before a large party. I remember walking there along a wild and rocky gorge in a wood: the rugged beauty of it should have amply satisfied me, and yet I had the feeling that came to me again a few years later near Philadelphia, that there was something missing. I missed the bears and all the things of the wild which should have been part of that scene. That I was much better without them is beside the point, for one's feelings are not always logical. One misses the wolf less poignantly in England and Ireland, because he is longer gone, so that his influence haunts our woods less vividly than that of the bear in the woods of America, from which indeed he is not entirely gone yet. I remember a young American in that house, a boy of about sixteen, who was very much interested in the British Constitution. "Can the Queen snub a duke?" he asked Lady Dunsany. He must have had a chess-player's mind, and wanted to know the exact moves. "Everything goes by precedent in England," he said to me. "The King could no more go about without his monocle than he could go without his crown."

I had to make some comment, so I said: "As a matter of fact if he had his crown he couldn't be without his monocle."

"Why so?" asked the young man.

"Because, as you say," I replied, "everything with us goes by precedent. One of our kings had to wear a monocle hundreds of years ago, so our succeeding kings had to have it too. But, as their sight was good and they

did not need it, it was let into the front of the crown, and is there to this day."

"I believe you are making game of me," he said.

And then I apologized, for I had received so much kindness from Americans that I ought not to have made game of one of them.

The snow came, and we all went tobogganing, and then I experienced for the first time lumbago, in all its suddenness, making it hard to breathe. And I had two other new experiences, an osteopath, who re-arranged a vertebra in my spine, which may have been infinitesimally shifted by one of the wilder flights of the toboggan, and an electric pad, by which, without burning the bed, an invalid could apply astonishing heat wherever needed. With all this treatment and the kindness of Mrs. Coonley Ward I recovered within two days, and then left by car for Buffalo, while blizzards roamed and danced over the fields. Whatever firm sells lightning-conductors throughout this district has a very neat device: their lightning-conductor above every roof runs through a round mirror; and all the glass balls were shining in the sun. Some people believe that a mirror attracts lightning, a belief that must be strengthened by every lightning-flash, but besides this inducement to buy the bright lightning-conductors, there must have come stories from all the earlier purchasers, of how lightning came to their roofs, seen with their own eyes, and was luckily averted by the conductor that had been fitted up just in time. But, whatever the reason for them, they are much the merriest lightning-conductors I have ever seen. Then to Detroit, where I was most kindly entertained by Mr. Palms at his house on Lake Shore Road, and was shown over the Arts and Crafts Theatre, where I was given a fine design that had been painted for my *Tents of the Arabs,* and on next day to Rochester. All went well at Rochester, and we went on to Westover at Middleburg in Connecticut. How easy it is to make mistakes! This is probably known to everybody, but examples do not come amiss. To begin with, I think Williams got the wrong train: it started in the cold, very early from Rochester and put us down at 7 am to wait in a small town for two hours. We went to an inn, and I sat on a sofa in a passage, and then, having had little sleep, lay down on it. A maid going by at that early hour put a blanket over me, with the usual American kindness. It was probably the blanket that made all the trouble, for, when the manager came by, one of his own blankets out of place may have caught his eye more violently than a mere traveller resting would have done. At any rate he abused me for lying

on the sofa, and I asked why I should not. “Because,” he said, “if you do that we can’t know if you’re drunk.”

Suspicion, though sometimes necessary, has always seemed to me to be one of the mean vices. How did one prove, I wondered, that one was not drunk? And there came to my aid that often unwise ally, logic. A drunken man could not fight, at any rate not to win; so I explained this to the manager and offered to fight him. After all I had been considerably insulted. I don’t suppose I in the least abated the manager’s suspicions, but at least his abuse ceased, and no more occurred. Afterwards Williams said, a little wistfully, “It’s a long time since I have seen a good fight.”

He then told me two things that had not occurred to me; firstly that, if the manager had accepted my offer, he would have fought with knives or whatever came handy, and all the waiters would have joined in; and, secondly, that my argument which I thought so effective was the first, and usually the only, argument that men use who really are drunk.

At noon we came to Waterburg, whence we were driven to Westover School. There I was shown a dress-rehearsal of one of my one-act plays, and was given a little rest after my journey. Lecturers will know how rare such rests are, and part of this leisure I employed in writing the following poem, which I read to the delightful girls of Westover School.

FOR THE GIRLS OF WESTOVER

Coming when hours were cold and thin,
The small hand pointing to the first,
From Rochester to Someone’s inn
(Be it above all inns accurst!),
And after that more railway-din,
You see a poet at his worst.

A moment’s rest: the impatient miles
Wait but a day and on I dart.
If I have pleased you here awhiles
With any word on life or art,
It was the sunshine of your smiles

Again reflected from my heart.

And so on next day to New York, to which Lady Dunsany had come by separate ways. At a reception at the New Arts Club I was told that I had shaken hands with five hundred and thirty-five people. This of course is nothing like a record, but to me it was an experience. Among all the entertainments of the next three days there stands out most vividly in my memory a luncheon given to my wife and me by the League of Political Education. I had spoken to the members of their league earlier in the day at the Carnegie Hall; without of course knowing in what kind of politics they were interested, or what political good they could derive from my views, but I did my best. There were only ninety people at the luncheon-party, but I think I never heard better speeches. Two English writers were there, Gilbert Cannan and Stephen Graham, and, among American writers, Miss Edna Ferber and Kate Douglas Wiggin. All of these spoke, as well as a Chinese lady, Dr. Yamei Kin, who spoke in beautiful English, and the Indian writer Mr. Mookerji, the memory of whose speech remains with me to this day: he told of the Indian jungle in the evening, with everything hushed, expectant and on strained haunches, until the tiger puts his yellow, striped face out of the jungle and opens his mouth and yells; and not till he is out is the ordinary life of the jungle renewed. I met him a few days later at dinner, and the poet Khalil Gibran was there too, whom I remember complaining to me that Europe gave no credit to the East for centuries of contemplation. I suppose we are busy with our factories, and inclined to say What is the use of merely sitting and thinking? While the Orient probably says, “What good do they do with their factories; and how can a roughly ornamented bit of cast-iron compare with the value of a thought?”

And the climate over Europe drives us to these activities, and I suppose always will, and the climate of Asia lulls the centuries to a calm that nourishes contemplation, and will I suppose do so down vistas of time that stretch far beyond our vision.

CHAPTER VII

BANQUETS AND EAGLES' FEATHERS

ON DECEMBER 10TH LADY DUNSANY WENT HOME FOR OUR BOY'S HOLIDAYS, (now a major in the Near East), and I went to Boston to visit Harvard University, and to see one of my plays very well acted by the Harvard Dramatic Club. One might write one book about Harvard and another about the Widener Memorial Hall there, with all its books, but there is a paper shortage. Two days later I returned to the sparkling air and the kind people of New York. I remember particularly the Pen and Brush Club and a delightful club for men of various artistic leanings, called the Coffee-House. At the Players' Club in a lovely leafy square, to which I was taken by Mr. Clayton Hamilton, they reverently preserve the room in which Booth died. And Mr. Mencken and Mr. Nathan, editors of the *Smart Set,* who had already shown hospitality to my fancies, gave me lunch when I appeared in bodily form. I remember still a reception at the Barnard Club, and a visit to the Amateur Comedy Club where a magnificent recitation of Lewis Carroll's jabberwock was given in the style of grand opera, accompanied by occasional notes on the piano. Vividly as I remember this enchanting performance, and vividly as I remember my friend Mr. Quinby, I cannot now remember if it was he or Mr. Heywood Brown, or perhaps someone else, who delighted us with it that evening. A few years later Quinby died, to my very great regret.

Merely to give names, from the recesses of a grateful memory, will convey little impression of a visit to New York, even when they are names that the world knows. Among the latter Maeterlinck stood out, and I saw a good deal of him, as we were often entertained together by Mrs. W. K. Vanderbilt and others. Though Maeterlinck spoke very clearly, and delightfully, in conversation, a foreign accent came out in his lectures which seemed to interfere with their success. This must have been a great loss, for the only one that I heard was of deep interest. I remember that he was defending the immortality of the human spirit against some scientists who had urged that thought was impossible without brain and that life must therefore end with the end of the brain. I remember one astonishing argument by which Maeterlinck disproved this, saying that he would point

to an instance of thought, or planning, without brain; and he instanced tendrils seeking the light, which would find their way up through all the eyeholes of an old boot.

I saw the New Year in with friends at Castle Rock: Mr. Pond wanted to exhibit me in Texas and other Western States, but I was realizing more and more what always seemed pretty obvious, that a writer's job is to get on with his writing, rather than to do much talking about it; and that much appreciation, even though he succeed in not getting his head turned, only increases his debt to his readers, and this debt is not easily paid among constant receptions and interviews. Not that I lead a literary life; on the contrary my life has been mainly devoted to sport, though once in every few weeks I would come indoors, driven by the impulsion of some idea, and work hard for several hours. A little such work I did while I was in America, but very little, and, if anyone stayed there too long, receiving praise for work he had done, the tendency might be that he would be tempted to rest on his oars. I do not know, because I never risked staying there long enough. So before the new year was much older I sailed in the *Adriatic*. Arthur Hopkins had given me a new play by Eugene O'Neill to read, and had asked me to let him know what I thought of it. It was his play called *The Long Voyage Home,* and has been considerably altered from the form in which I read it. It was a most excellent play and I remember it vividly, even though I have from the same time the tremendous memory of an abscess at the root of a tooth. I remember one night when, in my opinion, it grew too bad to be endured without some sort of dope, and I waited till the hour when I decided that the doctor would be up and dressed, and then hurriedly sent for him and asked for one of the deadlier drugs that might assuage toothache. He gave me something, and it was like the cures that you read of in advertisements; the reason I suppose being that, about the time I decided was the time for drastic remedies, the abscess, being at its worst, burst. The well-known writer Talbot Mundy was on board, and I shall never forget his kindness in walking up to a very late hour up and down the deck on which my cabin window looked, asking people not to talk near my cabin, in the hope of getting me some sleep. Toothache is a little thing to write about, but it loomed large at the time, and such kindness as Talbot Mundy's looms large still. To my American friends on board I said one day: "I shall talk no more about the drama to-morrow, because we shall be half way across, and

on that side I do not count as being a writer of plays, and so it would be silly to talk about them."

They were puzzled, but one of them walked along the decks and came back and said to me: "What you said was perfectly true. I said to one or two people 'Dunsany is on board,' and I see now that what you said was right."

I returned to Ireland and to hunting foxes and shooting snipe, and to very little writing; for the world, which Wordsworth said was too much with us, had been very much with me of late. And in the summer came an invitation from the State of Czechoslovakia to be entertained for a fortnight, with H. G. Wells, Sir Henry Wood, C. R. W. Nevinson, and Robert Nichols, and several reporters from English papers. It was a delightful time. They sent us across Germany and through Nurnburg, in which we spent some hours, and one morning in the train as we neared Prague one of our party came to me and asked me if I was ready. I was practically dressed, and said yes. He came again as the train began to slow down, and asked me if I was quite ready. As I now had only to brush my hair, I was rather surprised at this second visit, when all of a sudden I heard a rush of booming sounds, and saw that our carriage was about to stop in front of a brass band which was already playing, and gay uniforms all along the platform showed that our party was right in the midst of a reception. What followed was not personal to me, as in America. Wells was the only one of us who could have been known across Europe. We were a party of British people, chosen on I know not what principle, and what they felt towards Britain they expressed to us. Men with eagles' feathers in their hats met us in the waiting-room, and there were speeches. I forget who made them on our side, but I think we all showed the team-spirit and uttered our share of speeches as required, which was roughly one to each course at a banquet; and, as the only meals we had during that fortnight were banquets, we gave a good many speeches between us. Then we were driven to the British Legation, through a big crowd all the way, all cheering this party from England, because they all believed that the freedom that England had given them would last far beyond 1938. And so it will. But what dark five years were hidden from that happy and generous crowd, of whose thanks we were the chance recipients! We were very kindly entertained by Sir George and Lady Clerk in a fine old Bohemian castle, in whose great vaults and underground passages Lady Clerk told me steps were often heard at night, which Sir George believed to be ghosts. I remember wondering that a Minister should believe in booted

ghosts, which shows how little I knew of diplomacy. In these days of the wiring of walls such crude noises are probably heard no more in embassies and legations.

Besides the hotel in which we were housed there was a room in another building in which we could all meet whenever we were not eating banquets, and a Czech official named No. 15 was told off to look after us: he had another name when he was at home, and once we were told it, but as it was a foreign name that they did not expect us to remember they explained that he would always answer to the name of No. 15. We were all entertained by President Masaryk in the lovely Hracadny Palace, high up overlooking Prague; and one night in another palace we listened to what Major Meyer, who was one of our party, told me was finer chamber-music than we would ever hear anywhere else. It was a warm night with open windows, and moths floating in from the dark. We were to have been shown round the country beyond Prague, but were told that the tour was cancelled on account of smallpox. And so it was, but it was not the people in the country who had smallpox, but a case of it had appeared amongst, or close to, us. For one day we were all taken and vaccinated by order of the State. One lady-journalist, having a very delicate constitution, was taken into a room away from the rest of us, as special precautions had to be taken. I saw two doctors standing by her as the door shut, but never knew what those special precautions were, until I met her years later in London, looking very fit, if not tough. And she asked me if I remembered her. I said, "Of course. We were vaccinated on the same day."

"Yes," she said. "I had it all washed off."

The State had to be obeyed, but nobody could prevent a lady from washing herself, and the doctors naturally obliged with whatever disinfectants are necessary to be unvaccinated. She was of course a busy woman, and did not want to have a stiff arm. The State had done its duty, she took the risk, and everybody was satisfied.

We were shown a good deal of the Sokols, which gave a great display for us. The Sokols were the athletic schools in which young men were taught physical exercises. It was in these Sokols that they had been trained to free Czechoslovakia. And when, a few years later, one read of the interest that the Germans were taking in athletics, I knew what was being done. One might lay it down as a rule, after having seen what was accomplished in Prague, that wherever one sees a wide interest developing in athletics of this

nature in any country, the size of whose army is limited, that that is what they will be doing. I had never before seen twelve thousand men on parade being drilled by one instructor, nor had I ever seen smarter drill. As one man could not drill twelve thousand, the instructor was the band, and their words of command were the different notes of music. I had never seen sound travelling before, but I saw it travelling then over the heads of twelve thousand young men; for, though they all moved instantly with perfect precision as they heard the note of music, they could only move as it reached them, and one saw their movement going like a wave over them at exactly the pace of sound. And then from opposite sides of the parade-ground there marched on twelve thousand girls, some wearing blue shirts and caps, some red, some c white, marching like the men, and as the two lots of six thousand met, and turned, still to the notes of the music, towards the grandstand, they formed at one moment an absolutely perfect Union Jack; they did not halt at that moment, but still marched on, till the reds and the whites and the blues were all mixed up; but for that one moment colour, width and design were perfect, and exactly produced our flag.

The streets of Prague in those days were full of men in from the country, wearing their national dress, and hats adorned with an eagle's feather; and the girls wore many yards of the bright embroidery that they all work, each making her store of it for her wedding day; but now it seemed to be Prague's day, and they were giving all their brightness to Prague, who was celebrating her union with Liberty, two fair sisters that might seem now to be lying dead, were not one, at least, of them immortal.

War and revolution had drifted into the shops of Prague light fragments of the wreckage of an empire; hundreds of fine brocades were to be seen, but each only a few inches square, as though they had been cut from rich fabrics the rest of which had been destroyed by fire; and ikons were there, ornate with gold and silver, and pieces of old china.

Only to-day there came to my hand a book of the poems of Longfellow, and I opened it and read

That a midnight host of spectres pale
Beleaguered the walls of Prague.

And I remembered how the graveyard lay just outside the city, separated, if I remember right, by some kind of ravine; and as I saw it I realized how the story arose: there lay the great graveyard with its lines of graves facing the great city; only one full moon and very little fancy were needed to

supply the story of one more army coming to attack Prague, and the story has been vouched for by several poets.

They put on one of my plays at the State Theatre, a rather short three-act play called *The Laughter of the Gods*. It was well staged and very well acted and, by a simple device, the actors were all word-perfect; for the prompter quite audibly read through every line and, though most of the house could hear him, his low voice very soon seemed to attract no more attention in the audience than does the voice of the cricket among people sitting talking by the fire. Though I knew no word of Czech, I much enjoyed seeing them act *Smee Bohu,* which was the name of my play in that language. Some people think that plays of strange times and outlandish countries are incongruous things to show to the people of our towns and of our time; but they are not half as incongruous as a black coat and a white collar in fantastic scenes amongst oriental dresses, as I realized when I was shown a photograph that they took of the leading lady and myself on the stage.

One day when we were about to leave I went into Wells's room, and saw him on his knees on the floor leaning over a portmanteau; and then he explained to me something of our social system as he saw it. There are students, in all countries, of Wells's social system, and many of them may hold that I have got it wrong, but to some my words may come as a contribution to the subject, certainly minute, and yet perhaps quite new to them. His views, I gathered, were upon these lines: there was a class of highly educated men, trained in the best universities for the better kind of activities; such men could not be required to do menial tasks like packing, nor even be expected to know how to do it; men of a humbler caste and less highly trained should do this for them. That, if I got it right, was part of his social philosophy; and, having given his son a very fine education, he was now packing his clothes for him.

CHAPTER VIII

ADVENTURES AMONGST SNIPE

I RETURNED TO OUR HOME IN KENT, AND FOR THREE DAYS IN JULY IN A VERY peaceful wood, a narrow belt of oaks and hazels such as we call a shaw, I wrote the first scene of a play in four scenes that I called *The Flight of the Queen.* The play was well named, for it told, as I think the titles of plays and books should tell, what the play was about. The first scene was in the Hall of the Hundred Princes, and the time was June. The wood in which I wrote it was on the top of the hill, but I got the idea in our house on the side of the valley, in the roof of which the queen that I told of actually reigned, and at the end of June her dead and dying suitors used to be on the path by our verandah. For it was of the queen bee that I wrote, adapting her story to humanity; and, just as in a play of France or Spain, when written in England, all the characters speak English, so the characters in my play appeared as human beings. It is, I think, the most poetical of my plays, not that the material of which a play is made very much matters, the only thing that does matter being that it should be dramatic. I heard of this play not many years ago being acted at a girls' school in Pretoria, and was astonished to read of one or two protests that had been addressed to a paper, complaining that such a thing should never have been shown at a girl's school. But, far from being coarse, I had idealized Dame Nature till the old lady would only have just recognized herself. I used to like to write in well-bound books on good paper. In the book in which I wrote this I remember that the later scenes, which I wrote indoors in Ireland, were written in ink, but I do not now remember if I had ink in the wood, or if I wrote it in pencil and inked it in afterwards, but I do remember that the book, though quickly written, had a fairly tidy appearance; and, when Kipling died and left his manuscripts to universities that had honoured him, I was so much struck by the idea that later, when one university similarly honoured me, I decided to leave it one of my books. In 1941, when the Germans were very near Athens and Mussolini had claimed to own the Mediterranean, and it did not seem quite certain that we should get away, I wrote to make arrangements that this book should be left to Dublin University; and when, thanks to H.M.S *Carlisle*, we did get away, I thought Why should they not have it

now? So, filled up later with poems, because the play did not quite fill it, Trinity College, Dublin, now has this book.

I do not now remember the date, though the rest I shall always remember: a telegram came one day from my old friend Lindsay, telling me that he was ill, and asking me to come and see him in a kind of military camp for consumptives, in the South of England. So I went by road, and though I forget where this institution was, I remember going along the line of the downs and under Box Hill, roughly the old Pilgrims Way to Canterbury from Winchester, going in the opposite direction. And so I came to the encampment of huts where my friend was being treated. So hearty a greeting he gave me that I could hardly realize that he was once more composedly looking at Death, as he had looked at it when he stood beside me in April 1916 and it was coming from only forty yards away, and touched my left cheek and passed on, and missed him altogether. And now he was as bright and cheery as ever. I asked some idle question of one of the nurses outside his room, and she said something beginning with the words: "Well, everyone here..." And I understood that I was among dying men. We sat and talked for awhile, the zest of his conversation almost clearing the air of the shadow of death. Never can I remember a cheerier farewell, as he said goodbye to me. Soon afterwards I saw Edgar McWilliam, a friend of Lindsay and me, both McWilliam and I having been tended by him when wounded, and I told him that doctors said that Lindsay could only live a very few weeks. "Then they don't know Lindsay," said McWilliam.

And McWilliam was right, for Lindsay's strong spirit stayed on for many weeks beyond the time after which the doctors had said its habitation here could no longer be possible. But he died that year; and this year, the year in which I now write, with the world at war again, McWilliam, who had rejoined the army in 1939 and been made a staff officer in the R.A.F. with only ground duties, had nevertheless succeeded in going to Dieppe in the great raid, and was killed on the way back, just reaching England alive. And so passed a very bright spirit, so bright that I have wondered many a time how it was that McWilliam passed through his earthly journey, only delighting those who actually knew him and saw him face to face.

From Dunstall we returned to Ireland for the usual cricket that, but for the years of the war, we had always played there at the end of the summer. And, while mentioning cricket, I may say that it would be incorrect to state that the battles of Africa were won on the playing fields of Eton, for Sir

Harold Alexander was not at Eton (nor General Eisenhower either, for that matter). I do not know if in course of time a legend could be worked up that these battles were won on the cricket-ground at Dunsany; the basis of such a legend might be that here in 1911 Sir Harold used to drive something hard and round and red out of the ground, and that when later it was necessary to drive something similar out of Africa... But I do not know how the legend would go on.

It now began to be difficult to collect a team of cricketers, and after the Treaty was passed it became impossible. There had once been a proverb saying that union was strength, but many able minds had for some while been disproving that, till the cause of disunion won adherents amongst the Unionist party and the old proverb went the way of discarded fashions. I finished *The Flight of the Queen,* and then the hunting began, and the shooting-season opened. Hunting went its way undisturbed; and, if one met long cars with armed police sitting in two rows, facing outwards, they and the hunt passed on about our separate businesses. Nor did their opponents ever interfere with us, for though the shooting of men was common enough, Ireland had not yet sunk so low as to countenance the shooting of foxes. The pursuit of woodcock and snipe was not so easy, for in some districts there was a death-penalty for possessing a gun or cartridges, and in others merely imprisonment. I was still a soldier on the active list, although demobilized, and thought that for this reason the order against the possession of firearms could not apply to me. I was quite mistaken, as, having been demobilized, I was to all intents and purposes a civilian. With us in Meath we did not have the death-penalty, unless actually found with a gun in one's hand. The state of the country certainly made snipe-shooting more exciting than it usually is, and, being the only person shooting, I made good bags. Of all the hundreds of people for miles round who knew I was shooting, none gave me away, and I now record my gratitude for their kindness: I gave myself away by talking too much. I think I should make no such crude mistake in my plays, but whoever approaches any of the arts comes to them with a concentration in which there is no room for the carelessness that is common enough in life. I was later fined £20 for my shooting-season, and was lucky to get off so lightly. Perhaps the most exciting time my gamekeeper and I had while shooting snipe under these conditions was when, motoring with a retriever and gun and cartridges, we suddenly saw a cross-roads ahead of us occupied by a platoon of soldiers. I

stopped the car at once and got out and walked up to the officer commanding them and asked if we should be allowed to go by. As they were obviously waiting for such as us, he of course said yes; and I then said: “I suppose you are just looking for motor-licences.”

And he said: “Yes, and firearms.”

The moment he said firearms I said, “Oh, all right” and called out to my chauffeur to come on, and walked back to meet him. I had not begun to think yet, though thinking was obviously very necessary; but, whatever plan I thought of, I should have to begin by acting as I was now doing. When I got into the car I threw some rugs over the gun, which was already just covered by a waterproof coat and was leaning against the seat beside me. Then we drove up to the troops. Just as I came up to them I pulled all the rugs off the gun and began wrapping them very carefully round me. It would have been absurd to suppose that the officer, even if he could not instantly recognize a gamekeeper, would not know at once for what purpose I had a Labrador retriever in the car, but he was not likely to want to open fire unless for something more serious than shooting snipe, provided that I did not actually make it necessary by exhibiting my gun. In a sergeant, however, the game-keeper and the retriever, not to mention my breeches and shooting-boots, did awaken suspicions, and he leaned over the door of my open car and looked into the space beside me where my gun was. Had I not myself taken the rugs away he would of course have done so, but as it was he did not see the gun that lay between him and me. I was sorry to play any trick on soldiers, but there was nothing else to be done.

Snipe-shooting provided one of those thrilling moments that big game more usually provide, near that very cross-roads on another occasion: I had got out to shoot snipe by a stream going under one road and sent my car round to meet me where it ran under another; as I approached the other road I heard a car coming to meet me; it was so obviously my own car that I took no precautions for a moment, and then I thought that even though it was my own car one should take ordinary precautions on principle, and so I put my gun behind my back. At this moment a lorry-load of auxiliary police, Black-and-Tans as they were called, came by with their rifles in their hands: it was them that I had heard, and, as I was walking straight towards them, it was a good thing for my keeper and myself that I had put my gun behind my back. I don’t say that I was right to be shooting at that time, but it seems to me that the slight suspicion of pomposity that must attach to anybody who

writes the story of his own life, would grow to a grim certainty if he recorded only his wise acts and concealed all the others.

For four months I had written nothing, when towards the end of January I got to work on a novel, the first chapter of which I had written during the war. It was neither inspiration nor quite free choice that drove me to writing novels, but rather a belief that, for some reason unknown to me, the public did not care about short stories, at any rate not about mine. Personally, it appears to me that in a page of a short story there must be more art than in a page of a three-volume novel, just as in a square inch of an ivory-carving there is more art than in a square inch of a wall of a palace: everything in fact in a short story must be fairly intense, as in a play, whereas there is room for a certain amount of rambling in a novel. However it be, I preferred the short story, dominated all the way by its plot and ornamented by good prose, but I new got to work on a novel called *The Chronicles of Rodriguez.* It was about a young man who sets out with one attendant, during the Golden Age in Spain, to look for the wars, and comes to the sort of inn that Doré used to draw, and meets the professor who held the Chair of Magic at the University of Saragossa, and finds a house in the forest so splendid that "it was there that Pedro the Magnificent in his cups gave Africa one spring night to his sister's son," and other castles in Spain. I wrote a good deal of it in February and March at Cannes, where we stayed with my wife's mother, Lady Jersey, in a hotel. Cannes was a very pleasant place in which to write, especially when one was writing of the warm south; and, besides that, I had the sight of the Esterels, always a ruddy purple in the evening, and far beyond them great mountains, which I used to go up to look at about sunset from a raised platform on the highest point above Cannes. These were the Alpes Maritimes, with their great slopes of snow, gravely changing their colours in the gloaming. A poet does well to look at mountains, for, though he should know something of men and women, it is his job to see the eternal things that move or stand amongst them and shape their destinies, and among these the most visible and easily perceived are mountains. And never, when I speak of a poet, do I suppose that there is much of a gap between him and the rest, of whom some may have even deeper emotions than he has, though perhaps they may not express them through any one of the arts; but it is the emotion and not the expression that is the essential thing, and it is only people without human emotions that have nothing of the poet in them. Why one should sometimes feel when looking at

mountains something of what an exile might feel in a far country, when meeting some of the chiefs of his own land, I do not know, but such is the case.

CHAPTER IX

TO THE WILDS AGAIN

ALL THE SUMMER OF 1921, IN KENT AND IN IRELAND, I WENT ON WITH

The Chornicles of Rodriguez, finishing it on 4th August. At the end of May my play *IF* was put on at the Ambassadors' Theatre, with a very fine cast of which the most brilliant were Miss Gladys Cooper, Miss Marda Vanne, Miss Ethel Coleridge, Henry Ainley, Leslie Banks, Michael Sherbrook, Henry Caine and G. Hayes. There did not seem to me to be at that time, when *IF* was being rehearsed, a full appreciation of Miss Gladys Cooper's great ability, and I was given the idea that she had been chosen principally for her beauty, which, though a great asset to a play, is not an essential part of it; but both as a girl out of a job in London, and as a sort of queen in the East, her acting was an immense delight. So also was Ainley's, and there was one long scene between him and Michael Sherbrook which I never wearied of seeing; it seemed to go like a duel with rapiers. Even when Harry Ainley forgot his part, he forgot it with a superb dignity. Michael Sherbrook waiting for his cue had evidently said: "But you forget...," though no sound of such words was audible, but Ainley drew himself up with all the dignity of the oriental despot that he was supposed to be, and saying, "Very well, I do forget," walked grandly away.

Early in the rehearsals I had said to Leslie Banks that, as he was quite perfect, it could not be necessary for him to rehearse any more. But I horrified those who were directing rehearsals, and was told that I should give him altogether a wrong idea of himself; yet time has I think showed without any doubt that it was the right idea. Miss Marda Vanne, then almost unknown, was so good as an inhabitant of a little house in the suburbs of London that a critic, while praising her as she deserved, tried to explain her achievement by suggesting that she may have lived all her life in just those surroundings. But he missed her by the length of a long continent, for she came from the far end of Africa, where I recently met her again, too famous now to mind having that mistake recalled to her. The play was about a dictator, who went the way of Mussolini, though it was written before the march on Rome. It ran on into October, its principal rival at that time being

Miss Clemence Dane's *Bill of Divorcement,* with Malcolm Keen in the principal part, in the St. Martin's Theatre only just across the road.

That autumn we went to Arden in Yorkshire to stay with Lord and Lady Mexborough and shoot grouse, as we had done the year before, and many other years. There are three stone men on the steep top of Arden Bank, that are made of bits of nummulitic limestone: they were quite squat the year before, and were now recovering their stature. I suppose that now they have lost their height again, and the matter may seem unimportant; and yet it is not wholly unconnected with the fate of the world, for when no-one goes up there to replenish them with a stone or two every few weeks, it is because all the men are away, helping to reduce a kaiser or a fuehrer to his proper proportions.

Later that year we were at a shooting party at Petworth, where so much of Turner's work is housed and where the woodwork is carved by Grinling Gibbons. On a Sunday morning there, when the rest had gone to church I had a very interesting talk with the first Lord Cowdray, who was another of Lord Leconfield's guests, that is to say I sat and listened. He told me how as a young man, with some reputation already made, he was digging the Blackwall tunnel, and senior engineers were coming to him to tell him to stop, because it could not be done and he would lose everything if he went on. And he went to an older man and asked his advice, and this man said to him: "Have you done everything that you yourself know to be right?" And he said Yes. And the older man said: "Then go on." Then they went to his wife and tried to get her to stop him, to save him from ruin. And she said: "I back Dick (or whatever she called him)." He told me a great deal of the steel shields with which they went through the gravel under the Thames, but he, interested me most when he spoke of the older hands that tried to push. the young man into their grooves and furrows, for it is by escaping from them that the great names are made.

And then I went back to the wilds again, starting from Biskra. There I found bright sunlight in the middle of January, and there I collected a few Arabs and started off with my tent into the desert to look for Dorcas gazelles, which I had shot before, as well as the rare edni gazelle, and hoping for that fine trophy, the head of a Barbary sheep, which I had never seen as yet and of which I had only heard tales from the Arabs. Part of a letter that I wrote to my wife on 24th January, 1922, gives a clearer idea of the country than my unaided memory could give. I wrote: "*Really Africa*

does know the job of making a morning. Last night I went up to the tower just late for the sunset, but the air was still full of light. Looking North one looked into a semicircle of mountains running from one's right to behind one's left, a little more than a semicircle. To the West the mountains seemed to gather nearer and to sit down all dark and frowning, but to the East they melted away into a mass of pink. Over where the sun had gone down behind the mountains a small red cloud floated which turned, while I was walking round the tower, to an astonishingly vivid scarlet, redder than a hunting-coat, redder than the robe that Ainley wore, redder than anything, till all lustre left it and it hung there a listless gray. Over the pink rocks in the East the sky was mostly a Cambridge blue, and away to the South outside the curve of the mountains, a rather narrow strip, the Desert showed so deep a blue that it was almost black.

"*A light or two came out among palms and houses, the bell of the Christian church began to boom, and then from some ravine among low mud-houses those notes came up that Arabs play on their reed flutes, it was Pan challenging very softly, but with all his ancient cunning, the lure of the New Creed.*"

I met a friend in Biskra who I thought would have come with me, but I said in my letter to my wife: "*After all why cling to relics of civilization when one has left it for the desert. To bring another white face with me would be like taking a tall hat, and I think the desert would be huffed at either and would hide his mysteries beyond yet one further ridge.*"

And next day I wrote: "*This afternoon while sitting in the garden one of the mountains that yesterday I called pinkish turned the colour of rose, and glowed through the tops of the trees at the edge of the garden. Then I went back to the tower. The sunset did not seem quite so splendid as yesterday's, but I stayed and watched its changes. While the mountains in the West turned to a deep black the ones to the East were melting away into blue, like rose-leaves slowly dyed in an azure vat. At* 5 *o'clock two men came out upon separate towers and sang that there is one God. All the while the desert remained the same dark slate-colour. And then an Arab lighting a cigarette in the street showed by the brilliance of the flame that down below me the night had far progressed.*"

And next day I wrote again: "*I stayed up on the tower to-night until one star appeared in the same Eton-blue that was melting the rose mountains.*

There was a chilly wind blowing over a warm town. When the priests came out on to towers and sang that God was One, the lights had already become very clear and golden, where any appeared at all, and some other people that were up there went down, but I stayed where I was to see the last of the mountains." And later in the evening I added: "*The Arabs are giving a dance. A little bunch of them have just come round to the hotel door with a drum, which amounts to an invitation. A rather handsome fellow dressed in fox-skins and bones came up to me outside the door with his tongue hanging out and beating furiously on his drum. I smiled at him, which seemed rather to disappoint him, for he went away with his drum.*"

And I also recorded the following conversation with the *valet de chambre* of the hotel.

"I: '*Vous avez de moustiques ici.*'

"He: '*Ah, oui.*'

"I: '*Beaucoup?*'

"He: '*Neuf*'"

Luckily I did not tell him that I had killed one, for he thought I had said "*Vous avez domestiques ici?*"

I never lost interest in those sunsets, and wrote to my wife next day: "*I thought I would try and tell you what each sunset was like here, but by the third evening I began to fear they would be all alike, rose mountains to the East, black to West and plain pale-brown to the North, and the Desert always dark blue. But to-night, though everyone seemed to think it scarcely worth going to look at so dull an evening, there was an amazing change. The rose mountains were deep grey, the usually dull mountains to the North were dark red, and to the West the hills stood out so clear that you could almost see separate rocks on them, and could make out straggling paths on the sand below them, and encampments of which one had not known before. Huge, dark-grey shapes of storm were striding by on this side of the eastern mountains, going towards the Desert. In the South-West, a good deal shut in by clouds and mountains, an ordinary golden sunset was going on.*

"*And then there began to appear quite close with extraordinary suddenness the most amazing mountains and coloured rocks. They appeared out of the evening as things appear on the stage, quite suddenly, lit with crude unnatural, violent light. This sunset was beating Chu Chin Cairo even at its own game. A little range of hills that one had not noticed before, lying*

under the grey and erst-while rose-pink mountains leaped into the colour of peonies, which soon grew deeper and deeper, the whole of the far bank of the river wider than the Nile, which runs down to the Desert and is dry, caught the same glow: the end of a rainbow, mainly pink, stood up like a low tower on the horizon beyond the end of the mountains in the East: just to the right of it a tiny white house or tomb, which we had never seen before, stood vivid on the horizon: the grey shapes that were going past the mountain turned to a purply rose when they came to the rainbow: the little peony hills grew deeper in colour and dimmer, till they seemed to be drifting away by sheer magic to fairyland: then the storm broke over Biskra. I waited to see what the muezzins would do, and soon above the sound of the wind and the rain and the palm-trees swaying their voices came floating.

"*When I left, the heads of all the palm-trees in the forest of them were black, and between every two was a grey sheet of rain.*

"*The Desert was troubled and mostly veiled in orange.*

"9-30 p-*m.*"*I've just been out to sniff the wind in the street. It is not as cold as it might be and smells pleasant. It will be a change from hotels.*"

Next morning I added: "*The night always begins here with a parliament of dogs: it ended this morning with drums and that queer reed instrument that wails. There is still much wind. I start for the desert to-morrow morning.*"

CHAPTER X

AMONG ROSE-LEAF MOUNTAINS

THAT EVENING I WROTE: "*The sunset was all in the West to-night. The rose hills faded early and were only a pale rose: the peony hills of last night were mere mounds of dried mud: but over the hills in the West were layers of purply red into which a blaze of golden rays shot up as though they were being boiled above a furnace of gold. Later the purple tinge went out of them and they became all red, streaked through a sky of orange A Frenchman on the tower discovered patches of green, but you might have discovered anything there. At last, when the sky looked very devilish, the desert put up the rim of one red eyelid along twenty miles of horizon and leered at me. And then, as a hint of the magic that the Desert had power to do, the bright red widened upwards, though the sun down under the earth was going the other way. The desert remained as usual the same dark slatey blue.*"

I think there is no monotony in these descriptions of sunsets, and could scarcely be if one went on for a year, so various were they, and so much that I have never described there was in every one of them.

I went next day by train and charabanc to overtake the camels, doing in five and a half hours the hundred and six kilometres that, the last time I went, had taken me two long days. Major Richardson Cox, the friend whom I met in Biskra, came with me to see me off from the extreme edge of civilization, which was the oasis of Ouled Djellal. We walked there down narrow streets lined with huge mud walls that were higher than the houses, and here and there in those walls were doors made of wide planks cut from palm-trees, the only indication that there were any houses there. After walking for ten minutes, shut in by one of these streets, we came to the principal square, which was full of life, and heaps about a foot high of the little twigs of a heath were laid in long rows to be sold as timber. Suddenly a man came up to me and shook hands and addressed me by name. My own name in that strange town was about the last word that I expected to hear, but you meet strange things when you travel, and it turned out that he remembered from the last time I was there, or so he said, but I suppose that Smail, who was ahead of me with the camels, had told him that I was

coming. I wrote to my wife of the desert that lay at the edge of this oasis: "*The desert is exactly like a gravelled road whose breadth is equal to its length; there is just that amount of vegetation, and a fine supply of stones.*

"*A wind is blowing from the Atlantic on its way to the Red Sea. Tomorrow I shall be in the Desert*."

I went into the desert with seven men, four camels and two mules, and started off with four blank days. It is a good thing in a trip of this sort to expect even a fortnight without a shot: if that is part of one's plans, the rest is sure to come of itself. I asked Smail how many heads he thought I would get, but the only answer that I could get to that was: "I cannot tell you of the things of God. It is not like the goats that I buy." So he summed up the uncertainty that is the essence of sport. Six more blank days followed.

Of the first day in the desert I wrote to my wife: "*We left Ouled Djellal yesterday, travelled* 20 *kilometres and hunted gazelles after arriving in camp, a day that left me no time to write. Moving out of Ouled Djellal we passed through almost a forest of palm-trees, after leaving the narrow streets which one camel almost blocks. From this we came to the usual great river, which like all Sahara's rivers is quite dry. There a young David was slinging stones at a friend among the palm-trees; and presently a little curl of dust went up beside him, and then far away in the river-bed another which marked the* '*rico*': *it was evident that the friend among the palm-trees had a sling too. When we reached the far bank of the river all the stones seemed to tilt upwards, ragged and flat like the ends of perpetually upturned strata. We went some hundred yards before they became more orderly and were all obviously grave-stones. They must have put the dead at first just across the river and, as the ages went by, the graveyard went further and further; so that the further they were from the river the newer they were and the tidier.*

"*We reached a spot distinguished from the rest of Sahara by a few thorny bushes just after mid-day. I suggested it as a good place for dejeuner, but Smail went one better and camped there. After a short rest I went out to chasser. When l returned to camp a quite new moon was showing like a thin silver ring over the sunset, the lower part being a little thicker than the rest.*"

I think that the desert is to the mind what a bath is to the body: of all the little specks of dust that stick to one's skin there may be no actual harm in

any one of them, and yet one is the better for a bath; in the same way the trivial pieces of information and empty phrases that daily fall on our minds are swept clean away by the desert, and the mind is fresher and clearer for them. All athletes wash; all prophets come from the desert. After some days, as we travelled, two mountains came into sight, a rose-pink mountain that was called Djebbal Hamra, and one that looked like a sapphire every evening and whose name was Mimooni. At last I got a good head, and Smail kissed the black beard of the Arab who had brought me up to it, when we came back with the gazelle into camp. The mountains grew larger as the days went by, for we were travelling all the time towards Djebbal Hamra. One day it rained, and that enabled us to travel more directly, instead of steering so as to pass by wells, or little pools in the rocks. And then we came to where the desert had heaved into hills of stones about the feet of the mountains, and the soles of one's boots lasted for fewer days even than in the rest of the desert. We got more gazelles. A good many of the barriers that are between East and West disappeared then, for the Arabs love a rifle, and shooting was a language that they understood quite as well as I did. Their orthodoxy was, however, so extreme in this part of the desert that I had often difficulty in keeping them well supplied with food. A Mahommedan may not eat what has not been killed by one of his creed in the ritual way; and, though whatever I shot was usually knifed by one of them before it died, and though in most countries a latitude of perhaps half a minute is often allowed even after that, they would seldom touch the meat. It is not usually easy to argue about religion, but I made some headway with one argument, when I said, "There are many causes of the death of this gazelle: the captain of the ship that brought me from Marseilles was one who caused it, and, I, as you say, was another, but there is only one death for it, and you caused that with your knife." The argument impressed them and they said, "We will ask Si Amar."

Si Amar, besides being a great sportsman, was an extremely holy man, a sort of combination of what in our civilization would be a master of hounds and an archbishop. He was a little apart from the rest, and one of them went and asked him. But the answer came back that they could not eat it. They had their kouskous, a dish made of flour and rancid oil and sand, which they ate with great delight by the fire every evening. Sometimes I joined them by their fire under the great blinking stars, whose names and stories they told me. I was of course careful not to tell them in return that what they

ignorantly supposed to be Nash, being carried on his bier, with his wife and mother and sister walking behind him, was in reality the Great Bear; but I told them the Evening Star shone not like the rest, but with reflected light from the sun, which interested them, until unfortunately I added that it went round the sun like us. This unluckily shocked Si Amar, who, remarking that God did tell Mahomet that there are seven heavens, got up and walked away into the dark. Once, finding myself so very much of a heretic, I mentioned the name of a great Mahommedan leader whom I happened to know; but, very far from impressing them, I found that he was to them an arch-heretic. And once I told them that I was a second cousin of Sir Richard Burton, who went to Mecca disguised as a Mahommedan; and I found that they knew all about Burton, but were astonished to hear me speak of any disguise and assured me he was a Mahommedan. On the way to my eighth camp I shot a Dorcas gazelle which all the Arabs said was a bigger head than had ever been shot before in North Africa. When I doubted this, Smail said that Si Amar swore to it. And Rowland Ward's book supports Si Amar, though the record has probably often been beaten since.

Our trek to my ninth camp brought us to the edge of the slopes of Djebbal Hamra, towards which we had been travelling for several days. I used to start out from my camp just before dawn, and in one of my letters I wrote, "*As I was walking towards the mountains the sun came up unnoticed behind me. The mountains turned at once to the colour of peonies, a little pale for peonies I thought; then I thought that after all they were only the colour of big garden roses, or even the ordinary wild rose; and as I thought this they went pale brown, towards which they had been turning as my thoughts of their exact colour changed. A cloud lay to one side of them at dawn, a thing like pale pink gauze, as though it had just been pulled aside to show them.*"

About this time I wrote "*I am now camped under the rose-leaf mountains. They look a very pale brown* 5 *kilometres away: but Mimoona and his range, which are always a bright blue, this evening turned a gorgeously astounding pink. The distant rim of the desert too, which is always blue, was this evening all pink.*" That night the jackals did what they often did when a ca mp was newly pitched; they came down close to it and barked hard, in the hope that some small thing might run from our camp. But neither the cries of the jackals, nor the barking of the dogs of distant nomads, or any other sound, kept me awake in that splendid air after a day's

shooting. At this time a cutting from an English paper reached me, which I should quote here in case I should have given a reader a one-sided impression of the success of my plays in America or elsewhere. It said: "Among the less-known titled people connected with the stage are — and Lord Dunsany." The man that I have not named occasionally acted, so that the suggestion was that my only connection with the drama was to have done some amateur acting, not that I ever did. But this was only trying to reduce my reputation to zero, which was by no means enough for everybody, as I am reminded by a poem I wrote at this time called *Ode to a Dublin Critic* to which I was goaded by a critique of one of my books which said: "The publishers tell us that these are oriental or semi-oriental tales, and everybody who knows anything knows what that means." I don't quite know myself what my publishers meant by semi-oriental, but I do know that when a man says "everybody who knows anything knows what that means" he is implying something nasty that he daren't say. Exactly what he does mean must depend on the nastiness of his mind. Well, I should not have written this poem without him, and perhaps a little jealousy may be as good for a poem as manure is good for a rose. Here are the lines:

Ode To a Dublin Critic

Through steely gaps that I have known
In mirage mountains, upon wings
Has my imagination flown
To bring you news of magic things.

And lesser journalists have said,
That cannot see such things themselves,
The man is clearly off his head
To write of things like gods and elves.

By walls of cities not of Earth
All wild my winged dreams have run.
And known the demons that had birth

In planets of another sun.

From little fountain-pens they wring
The last wee drop of inky spite:
"We do not like the kind of thing
That lords," they say, "most likely, write."

Beyond the boundaries I have been,
That dull geography has drawn,
To bring you light from visions seen
In kingdoms eastward of the dawn

Having mentioned the fertilizer of this poem I should mention what was of even more value to it, the soil in which it grew; this soil was the Sahara, and it may explain the first two lines if I say that I was actually looking at a mirage when I began to write it, while riding a mule. I had shot by now eight Dorcas gazelles and one edni, and went on to Gsoom Mountain. I wrote to my wife after this journey: "*One great difficulty is water, though I rode all day past a lake on my right with little islands in it and tall trees: its hither shore was nearer to me than I have ever seen water in the Sahara before.*" Only one's dreams, of course, could drink from this water, for it was of the same substance as they. In my next letter I wrote: "*I have shot at nothing for ten days.... I enjoyed yesterday though I got no shot, for the view from this mighty mountain seems like nothing else on this earth, or Mercury, Venus or Mars: the immensity of the desert seen from the peaks of Gsoom would take Neptune or any of the four outer planets to beat it.*"

When one sees a lot of heads on a wall it may look to some like slaughter; but those periods of ten days should be remembered, during which one hunts or travels from just before dawn to sunset without ever firing a shot, either because one sees nothing, or because the heads one sees are not good enough; and whoever does not make due allowance for these periods of bad luck will never have good luck, which follows as red follows black, sooner or later, at *rouge-et-noir.*

Camped under Gsoom Mountain on 7th March, 1922, I wrote to my wife: "*Yesterday I paid my usual visit to the peaks of Gsoom, being called at five and leaving the camp at sunrise. In the morning I saw my first mouflon,*

a female with a young one: they stepped over the sky-line like the shadows offairies and lay down behind cover at about 350 *yards from me. Afterwards they pushed off with a good deal of clattering of rocks and I did not fire. Eventually in a remote valley Si Amar found four, two males, a female and a large young one. We came round rocks as they go round them, things not unlike precipices but with so rough a surface that one gets a good grip on any drop, and only stumbles on the slopes where loose stones are able to lie. We got to within two hundred yards and, looking over the rocks for the first time, I just saw the dim ghost of a mouflon; for, huge though they are, there is no difference that I can make out between them and the rocks. I fired and my guide's face fell, and the herd eventually passed out of sight, and Si Amar looked the picture of misery; but just then a lone mouflon appeared crossing the great valley on its own. I fired whenever I could distinguish it, but my shots dropped lower and lower, until it stood under the crest of the opposite mountain; then I aimed well above it and got a bullet behind its shoulder. It fell, recovered itself, rolled, and went over a precipice. Si Amar brightened considerably, and presently I informed him that, while he presumably was watching the others, I had killed a mouflon with my first shot. This one we got to first and it turned out to be a fine head, the second not so good but no bad ornament on a wall. I hardly expected to improve the hall, but this mighty beast is worthy of a place among oryx and wart-hogs. I have planned for him one of the places of honour, where the biggest pig is now, he going up one and displacing the lesser pig. We got back to camp at* 5.30 *having been for eleven and a half hours on the mountain.*"

I quote these rather rambling lines as they are fresher than my memories, though Gsoom and Djebbal Hamra and the huge circle of desert loom very clear in my memory yet, and our little camp on the rocks under the mountain, and Smail's joy when we came back with the two heads of the animals about which he had told me nine years before, but had not till now been able to show me, and the stately Si Amar to whom this world seemed made for hunting, and the next for strictly orthodox Mahommedans.

CHAPTER XI

AND AGAIN TO THE WILDS

FOR ANOTHER WEEK I CLIMBED THE CRAGS, AMONGST MAGNIFICENT STATUARY carved by the wind, always wondering at the vast size of our planet as I watched the curve of the desert seen from the mountain, but I got no more shots. And one day we turned our camels' heads towards civilization, which is a very pleasant thing, and which I much enjoyed when we reached Biskra a few days later, but I like the desert too, and never does either appear more delightful than when contrasted with the other. And while I am on this very subject I may mention an event in my life that occurred at this time; I received as I arrived in Biskra a letter saying that I had been elected a member of the Beefsteak Club. Between this haunt of civilization and the wilds my life has alternated a good deal, always enjoying both. Unfortunately we have a rule there that no conversation goes beyond its walls. Were it not for that rule I need have looked no further for material for this book. As there is only one table in the club and as everyone talks to anyone within hearing, whether he knows him or not, cabinet ministers and ex-viceroys often get instruction there that they would not receive otherwise. Kipling once — but that is another story, as he himself would have said, and I am debarred from telling it by that unfortunate rule. Of the many remarkable men that I first met here, perhaps the most astonishing was Pepys Cockerell. When I first met him he was talking hard and with much brilliance: I will not relate the scraps that I remember of his conversation, but the topic of it was the pictures of the Old Masters, and I listened with deep interest, as did we all, but at the end of half an hour I thought it only fair to introduce a topic of my own. The topic that I insinuated was big-game hunting in Africa, a somewhat violent change of subject, but Pepys Cockerell acceded at once to my suggestion and for the next half-hour this was our topic; but it was still a brilliant monologue conducted by Pepys Cockerell. Later one other man and I dined with him at his house, and it was then that he revealed to us the source of his wonderful stories of Africa, and this is why I say that the man was so astonishing: his genius, for no other word could possibly be used of so strange a power, took the form which that night he explained to us in the following words: "When

I go to any country I don't talk for the first three weeks, but I watch how the inflections fall in their language. After that I speak it."

And it was well known that he spoke the languages and dialects of various lands and of many tribes, without any foreign accent whatever. I heard it said of him that during the last war, when he was on a general's staff in Greece, a Greek girl came to the general and said: "There is a Greek who has been going about lately in your uniform, pretending that he is British."

This was Pepys Cockerell, recently arrived, but speaking Greek in such a way that the Greeks could not believe he was British. With this remarkable gift he went to Africa, and that night at dinner he told us stories such as few other men from Europe could have come by, including an eye-witness's account of the last stand of Colonel Wilson's men in 1897, when every man of them was killed, as he had heard it from a Matabele. He told me how he went back to Africa again when they were opening up the railway to the Victoria Falls, and met an old chief whom he knew and, when he told him what he had come to see, the old chief said: "Ah yes, railway trains, I know about them, they have a red eye in the middle of their foreheads. I never saw one myself, but my father killed several of them about here when he was young."

To tell any more tales of Pepys Cockerell might seem out of place in a biography that I am writing about myself, but a man of genius is to me one of the more remarkable things that one meets on one's way. Something to be told of as much as one tells of mountains. And one more tale I must tell, of the many he told us then. He brought back from the middle of Africa a young native who had been his servant there, and showed him London, and told us many of his impressions of it; and one day he showed him Hyde Park and, as he sat on a chair and the young African looked at the Serpentine, Cockerell suddenly saw a nurserymaid beating him over the head with an umbrella. He went up to her and said: "What are you doing to my boy?"

She said: "He tried to steal my child."

Cockerell turned to the boy, and told him, in his own language, what she had said.

"I didn't try to steal the child," said the boy. "I saw it playing by the edge of the water and I picked it up and ran with it into the bush," meaning the trees by the Row.

“But why?” exclaimed Cockerell.

“But, the crocodiles,” said the boy.

I got the impression, fanciful and yet later borne out by facts, that Africa had laid some curse on him, and sometimes he seemed as though he were hurrying to his doom. Africa can break the health of men who stay with her too long and then desert her, and it almost seemed that she had her grip on Pepys Cockerell. Memories of my remarkable and delightful friend have carried me on beyond the year of which I was telling.

I returned to Ireland, but not to put away my rifle, for I had spent much of my life with a rifle, and when I was not hunting big game or stalking in Scotland or out with a shotgun I used to get sport and exercise by stalking rabbits. In this April, 1922, I shot two hundred and forty-six of them in this way. Rifles were now permitted in Ireland, for a good many purposes. The Government had made a Treaty with Ireland, giving great concessions to the King’s enemies and some safeguards for his loyal friends. But England, tired after her victory that had saved Europe, entirely forgot this treaty. Yet it is as I say; such a treaty was passed, and somewhere among some archives it may presumably be seen and read, safeguards and all.

In May we went to our Kentish home, where I continued the humble sport of stalking rabbits, so far as exercise was needed, but much of the rest of that month I spent in writing a light comedy called *Mr. Faithful*. The main joke of this play is that the principal character in it insists on being logical, in season and out of season, and the more logical his arguments the madder he appears, as often happens with people who put too much reliance on logic. It was done at the Kew Theatre and by the B.B.C., but when broadcast it had to be cut down so as to play in under an hour. I could not bear to do this, and thought it impossible, but I handed my wife a pair of scissors, and told her that if she could do it she was welcome to try, and she did it. But one whole character was cut out, and one that I rather liked, an old butler who once had dreamed of being something else; he does not say what; but comforts himself with the reflection that, “Perhaps it was better as it was. It saved a lot of bloodshed.”

I was kindly entertained on a long visit at Arden, at first for grouseshooting, and afterwards I went on with my miniature sport of stalking rabbits on grand hills that would have been a worthy setting for deerstalking. One valley there is so steep that, when one shot a rabbit on it from the opposite slope, it would roll the whole way down to the bottom.

Their tracks and sheep-tracks ran all along the steep slope, seeming to emphasize the wildness of it, and on these tracks the rabbits lay in the sun, and had to be distinguished from little pieces of limestone which were exactly of the same colour, the limestone that in times of peace made the three stone men to which I have already referred. On one of these hills at the edge of a wood one windy day I had the very rare experience of shooting two woodcock with a rifle.

Yorkshire is almost divided like Scotland into highlands and lowland, and about the middle of September we went to the other kind of Yorkshire, where there are fertile farms and no heather, to shoot partridges. This was at Helperby, the delightful house of Sir Clive and Lady Celia Coates: all their family were then young, and I was fortunate enough to be able to amuse them. This I did by building a factory chimney of toy bricks about six feet high in the drawing-room and, as all children love realism, I lit a fire inside, and the smoke came out of the top as in real factories. I shall always remember Lady Celia's sympathy with her children's delight, which, though she did not express it in words, for on account of the density of the atmosphere she could not speak, or even easily breathe, was yet unmistakable.

All art is made perhaps more by contrast than by any one other thing, and, if art should resemble life, perhaps life should resemble art, and no pleasanter contrast than Helperby could be found to the Desert, to which I now turned again. I had written to the old hunter, Si Amar, where he dwelt among his palm-trees, to meet me at El Kantara, and I packed my tent and my rifle and set off for Africa. But when I got as far as Paris I heard that there was a strike in Marseilles harbour, whence no ships were sailing to Africa, and so for ten days I was marooned in Paris. I remember to this day my disgust when in what is called a Travel Bureau, a clerk who had been arranging my trip asked where I was now staying, and I gave him the name of the hotel, and he suddenly manifested unmistakable signs of respect for me because I was staying at that hotel rather than at another. I record it because philosophers will see something wrong in a civilization in which such a thing is possible.

Did I use the wrong word when I said marooned in Paris? I think not. For during my unexpected stay of about ten days I could not have been lonelier on a desert island. I knew one man in Paris, one who had translated some of my stories, but he had changed his address and I could not find

him. Occasional loneliness is of great value to a writer, if not to all men, and I absorbed something of the beauty of Paris in those days, noting in how many places man had impressed his dreams upon bronze and other metal. I reflected that this is one of man's great achievements, to make his dreams tangible. The ants, the birds, the bees, work for utility, and a very good thing to work for; but we claim that there is something more than this in man. What is it, if this claim be just? What is there to man that the others have not also? His dreams and fancies? Perhaps birds and beasts have them too. Let us then look at man's, let us see what evidence he leaves of any grandeur he claims. The evidence is there in bronze: there was something great in his dreams, and he had the strength to make that greatness triumph over the grim hardness of metal. That was some while ago: wreaths, wings and all manner of fancies are going out of our architecture and out of all designs, and the surface of metal appears bare, and untouched by the dreams of man: Chaos is coming into his own again. Amongst these reflections, for which my lonely visit to Paris gave me leisure, I met the spirit of Verhaeren. For a writer does not need to have an address at which he must be sought; his spirit may haunt a bookshelf and be met at any time, even after the house at which he lived has fallen, and I read a wonderful play of his about Helen grown old.

One day a man walked into my sitting-room at the hotel and announced himself by saying: "I am the Sun." He worked for a New York paper, and explained that he wanted to know what I was doing; so I said that I was going to some mountains in the Sahara to shoot Barbary sheep, and he was interested and wanted to know how many, and what other things, and what the size of their heads would be. For prophecy I would have chosen some more usual topic, like politics, and sport last of all, so I said: "Wouldn't you rather hear of something that I have shot already?" And he said: "I guess our paper has to be up-to-date."

Last March was out-of-date, and I had to confine myself to next November.

On 9th and 10th October I wrote a one-act play. And then in an English picture paper I saw two photographs of a man who had been rejuvenated by the Voronoff treatment, which was then new. Sometimes out of events, though rarely enough, there arises for one that kind of essence of fact and the passing of time which forms an idea for a play and will blossom into a living work of art. From this glance at a paper, while alone in Paris, such an

idea came to me, and on 14th, 15th and 16th October I wrote the first act of a play that I called *Lord Adrian.* One day I heard that there was a little ship called the *Djebbal Gherson* going from Marseilles to Algiers, so I booked a berth in it and sent a wire to Si Amar and started off from Paris. In Marseilles harbour the East came to me, or rather sent its blessing from far away, as I leaned on a rail of the *Djebbal Gherson* and looked at the lower deck, where Arabs were beating small drums and playing a stringed instrument, and singing the song that haunts all the coasts of Africa.

CHAPTER XII

WITH SI AMAR

TWO DAYS LATER I WAS IN A TRAIN GOING SOUTHWARD FROM ALGIERS through fertile land at first, and then it grew wilder and wilder as it seemed to feel the influence of the desert. A fellow-traveller looking out at the little houses of the Arabs that we passed every now and then wondered that people could live under such conditions, but I was longing for the wilds and he regretting the civilization he had left in some city of the United States, and with our different points of view I could not understand him. I have found an old letter to my wife, written shakily in a train, full of the trifles that loom large when one travels, dated 22nd October, 1922. It begins: "*We are just leaving El Guerrah, where I saw ten of my registered colis instead of eleven. So the Station Master and his assistant with the help of some Arabs spent ten minutes counting them to try and make them eleven, which they always did, an Arab always coming up with No.* 11 *whenever they were short. In the end it turned up, from a long way down the platform, or rather it must have come up on the El-Guerrah -El-Kantara train, which meets the other train somewhere, for the platform was empty. The colis that wouldn't* quite *make eleven was half my tent.*"

But what I was mostly thinking of just then was whether Si Amar would be there to meet me.

The great garden-wall of the desert rose into sight, a flash of green from a large grove of palm-trees, and El Kantara appeared. And sitting waiting on the platform, there was Si Amar. Everything was ready and we were to start next day. With me came the rain, a good omen to Si Amar, for it was good for tracking and good also for travelling, since there would be pools in many rocks and our journeys would not be confined to the routes that went by a few wells. In the great gorge of El Kantara I saw a river running with the first rain, and a tortoise that swam in it had an air of surprise at finding a river where there had been dry rock for a year. I went to l'Hotel Bertrand, and wrote to my wife, "*The view from my bedroom is staggering, such a view monks might look out on from their colleges in Tibet.*" Next day I wrote, "*My camels have gone like kings through this great gateway of the desert, but I follow a few hours later by the insignificant train and then*

walk or ride about ten kilometres. To-morrow we push on again and will camp on the shooting ground or on the edge of it."

I was needlessly worried at this time by calculating that I had only five cartridges a day for my whole trip, but I need not have been, even though I fired a few shots for practice in my first camp, which is always a good thing to do. I had had much difficulty in bringing any cartridges at all, for, though the French were charmed to let in my rifle, there was *un loi absolu* against taking cartridges, and I had to pull strings that would have been more appropriate for drawing a cannon. There was a little station in the desert called Fontaine les Gazelles, and there Si Amar and I got out. Writing to my wife from my first camp I said, "*I'm back again. When I got out at Fontaine les Gazelles the Station Master asked me if I wanted to get out: when I said I did there was clearly nothing to be done, but it was clear that nobody had ever done it before and he did not approve of this new-fangled notion of getting out at Fontaine les Gazelles. So we got out and walked away into the desert, and reached camp in three hours.*"

I remember the immense feeling of freedom with which I went from the noise of the train into the quiet of the desert, and I remember every head in the train looking out of the windows to see us get out at Fontaine les Gazelles, and still leaning out to see us walk away as the train went on to Biskra.

Next day I hunted with Si Amar and found only tracks, the day after that, 25th October, I wrote to my wife: "*We change camp at dawn to-morrow and I chasse on the way to the next one. One of our mules has returned to the house of his patron at El Kantara, or else the Ouled Zian have got him. There is considerable talk about it and a man has gone on another mule to look for him. The rain has been coming down in one lump and when it stopped we could hear the sound of a little river running in the dark. The big one by which we are camped will be moving soon if the rain goes on, and it is starling again now. Si Amar showed me an adni at* 200 *yards, and I got it. One horn is broken, but the other is equal to the best adni at Dunsany, and is another item for Rowland Ward's book. We aren't able to change camp to-day on account of the mule, but we leave to-morrow morning.... The mule has not turned up at El Kantara, and his patron has come here to help all the others to talk about it. We still have one, and can get another.*"

And in a very rough diary that I kept on that trip I wrote: "7th October. Changed camp. Rode 4 kilometres, walked nearly 40. Saw a heard of 5 sheep gallop by at 300 yards. Did not fire. Arrived 4 pm in our new camp in a gorge of the Ouled Zian Mountains."

Another blank day followed; then on 29th October I wrote to my wife: "*To-day, starting at* 6 *a m., a herd of four mouflon galloped past me pretty close at* 2.30, *I took off my sight-protector, cocked the rifle, and chose the best head and stuck to him, until the Arab with me called my attention to a better one further off. I had put four shots at the one I had chosen and put one at the big one, but missed, everything going at the gallop all the while. I still had a cartridge in my rifle but there was nothing more in sight. We then tracked the one I had chosen a short way and soon found him dead with two bullets just below his heart.*"

The head was not a good one: I could see by his great beard, as he galloped past, that he was a male, and I judged the size of his head as well as my inexperience would let me: the Arabs in this respect were seldom much help to me, for they did not easily understand a sportsman's peculiarity of only pursuing big heads, and Smail on my previous trip had been really pained when, after all the trouble that one of the Arabs had had in bringing me up to five gazelles, I would not fire at one of them.

On 31st October I wrote to my wife. "*It rained all night and blew, and hunting seemed impossible. However, a little before nine we started and had mouflon in front of us nearly all day long quietly feeding away from us, sometimes Si Amar manoeuvred up and round whole mountains, sometimes we got close but not within range, and I was ready to turn back, but Si Amar went on before like a Will-o'-the-Wisp. And at last he brought me on top of one in a valley. Not good horns, but all there were, and I could see they were passable, so I fired. — Then others came by and I fired at good horns as they passed. Total, three down. The first not much better than the second at Dunsany, the other two equal, at least, to the best at Dunsany. Then we heaped rocks over them and left, and the sun set. We had walked all day away from camp. A stormy sky let little moonlight through for our walk back to camp. However, a strong wind was with us, which is worth having.*"

The rain was coming down hard again.

And I ended with a postscript that said: "*To-day is a holy feast-day and they had bought a goat from the nomads for fifty francs. So I said I'd give*

them that. The rain is like broken sluices Three heads in one day may seem too much, but I had covered as much ground that day as would have made three good hard days, as well as climbing one or two mountains, and I had made three trips to Africa after these animals, of which I had now shot six, and I had earned them by several periods of a week at a time, and more, that I had gone without firing a shot.

And I got no shot during the next three days, though on 3rd November we saw a gazelle. But on 5th November I wrote: "*Yesterday a bad wind kept us in camp till* 1.20, *when Si Amar thought he'd try for something. So we left camp, and in an hour he saw two mouflon. He stalked them over mountain-tops for an hour, and it was one of the hardest walks I've had. We got above them, and even saw the one that Si Amar wanted, a very old one with white horns; but Si Amar, wanting to bring me to the mountain's edge, kept on too long: we were on a steep slope of crumbled rock, and for two men to move on it without any noise was impossible: and before we got to the edge they were off. I fired four shots at the white-horned one as he went; one perfect shot struck him without any apparent effect, and the fourth dropped him stone dead. The other had gone five or six hundred yards before Si Amar satisfied me that he was big enough to shoot at. He stood for a moment to look round and I dropped him stone dead with one shot. He turned out to be* 1 1/4 *inches bigger than any I'd got before; while the one that Si Amar was after is 1/4 inch smaller than the two best I had in camp.*" If I was right in my estimate of the distance at which I fired at the second sheep it is of course much further than one would usually fire, but while firing at the other one I had found exactly where my bullets were dropping at that distance and when I saw the animal clearly in that bright air I knew just how far to aim above him. I never alter my sights on such occasions; it is far easier to estimate how much higher one must aim by seeing where one's bullets are dropping in the dust than it is to guess the distance and play with one's sights. I remember that stalk very well, crawling over the skyline with Si Amar and then going down the crumbled slope, hidden from the sheep by the edge of the precipice to which it led, and afterwards finding that a man who came with us to carry our lunch and to look after everything that we shot had crawled when we crawled and stood when we stood; but, as he was on the skyline (over which we had crawled) while we were walking down the slope, he walked over the skyline. It was probably

he, rather than a pebble disturbed by ourselves, that had set the sheep galloping. My letter went on to a description of the lovely laurier rose which was blooming in the ravine in which we were camped, and ends thus: "*It's just the end of the brief twilight now, and four of them are praying all together a few paces away. It is wonderfully melodious when they do that. Last night they all did it together under the full moon.*" On 6th November I wrote: "*I got the big head that I came out here after, to-day. Not a record, but about half a foot bigger than my average. There was a small cool breeze that kept one refreshed, and I didn't have a very tiring day getting him, and in fact none of Si Amar's Napoleonic stalks, because Si Amar never saw him. But we had a bit of a walk back to camp, and nine and a half hours on the mountains. We were following tracks down a ravine; and near the end of it the mouflon turned and came back for the mountains round a hill. Si Amar was looking through his glasses elsewhere, but I heard them, eight of them. They stood a moment, giving me time to pick the big horn and fire, at a trifle over two hundred yards. I was not able to choose another head among such a crowd at that range as they galloped off. So I did not fire at any more.*

Si Amar says it was three hundred yards and he is very likely right, because I aimed above the mouflon so as to hit him, 'which one does not have to do at two hundred.... Of course, compared to this, East African shooting is more like making a good shot with a bun at the Zoo."

My next letter tells of an experience that comes occasionally to all sportsmen and which we dislike more than all other pieces of bad luck, that is to say wounding an animal. It also tells of the manœuvres of the Arab who accompanied Si Amar and me to which I have already alluded, it is dated 12th November, 1922. "*On 8th November I climbed Median Mountain and we came on three mouflon in a cave, one very big one. I was about to fire when they suddenly galloped off. The man that carries the lunch had walked up behind us to see the fun, incidentally walking over a skyline over which we had crawled flat. — Then as I fired at the galloping mouflon he shouted encouragement — which was what gave him away. This rather put me off and the shot was not fatal.*

"*This man is very likely the reason why several of my shots have had to be at a galloping object.*

"*However, we soon struck a blood-trail which led to the very heart of the mountains where there are caves in inner ravines, to which the mouflons very likely go to die.*

But then the trail ended, and with little more than an hour of daylight left we could make nothing more of it.

"*Next day we went back and searched in the direction towards which the trail had led, and after an hour or two the wounded mouflon came out of his cave, under a hundred yards away, and one shot killed him at once. He is far the largest I have got. It looked an easy enough place to get out of, a ravine among moderate hills, and a dry water-course running towards the desert; but we were above three belts of precipices, and it took some while to get down and across a strip of desert back to these mountains. Since then I've got nothing: 10th November I rested,* 11 *th November was blank; and to-day, though I was out for six hours, was spoiled by rain. Yesterday, by the way, I came close on two, but they were no good.*"

My next letter dated 16th November explains what I have said before, that a few big heads on a wall are the high lights, and blank days are the shadows: "*Luck is now at its very lowest here. Since the mouflon that I first saw on* 8*th November I have not fired at another, though seeing some with poor horns; and we've seen no adni or gazelles. I've seen nothing worth shooting at for a week, and have worked hard every day till I rested yesterday. — To-day we changed camp and I hunted in the evening, but still without seeing anything. It is very depressing indeed.*"

As for the depression, that cannot be estimated by a blank day at home when rain spoils partridge-shooting. There, where one does not hear a word of English spoken for a month and a half, one has only sport, and for a little while at dawn and sunset an astounding glory among the mountains, which are usually dull brown. And my next letter dated 18th November begins: "*Ill-luck continues and grows worse. I have shot nothing since 9th November. But it may change.*"

And change it did, for in the same letter, under the heading 19th November, I wrote: "*Now I should have liked to come home, as I got a head to-day that brings the trip to a fitting conclusion: but it is hard luck on the Arabs to strike camp because one has had* good *luck: the remedy would be too easy. Si Amar says the head is the biggest ever shot. I don't suppose Rowland Ward will.*" In spite of this that head, and two of my others, come

high up in Rowland Ward's list of big heads shot all over the world. I continued: "*I hit him in front of the shoulder, but much too low and he got up and went off. Then another male mouflon appeared which we hadn't seen. I fired at the big one till he dropped, then as the other galloped over the skyline, silhouetted against the sky, I dropped him on the skyline. And he is bigger than any I had before, bar two.*

"*I've just been looking at the sunset, or due East rather. The mountains on my right were dull, with peaks that just glowed here and there. The mountains on my left were gold, and turned to molten gold, and further East turned pink. The mountains in the East at the end of my vista were all pink and turned to peony colour and then purple. Then great blue shadows came down amongst them, and a great number of pink hills seemed to crowd together then under their blue pavilions, and were all at once mysterious, as though they said: 'We have business with the Mountains that is no affair of man.' I went down to my tent then, a few feet below, to put on something warm against the wind that blew from the sunset, When I went up again, half a minute later, nothing remained of all this colour but a deep blush in the sky. The horn of the big one is* 26 1/2*inches long and just a foot round at the base.*"

I remember this mouflon very well, I only remember three times looking right into the eyes of an animal; a lion, a python and this mouflon. His hind legs were still supporting him when I came up, but his forelegs had collapsed and he was motionless, I thought that he was almost dead and went right up to him to put another bullet near to his heart, when I fired he raised himself with a great effort up to his full height, taller than me, and looked right at me and then died. By a quiet sigh from Si Amar standing beside me I realized then what a bad business it would have been if the mouflon had lived a couple of seconds longer. On 21st November I wrote: "*It is now evening and the Arabs, having prayed, chant a long psalm together led by Si Amar. This is very beautiful, but the silence of the desert rushing back when it is over is more wonderful still. It is as though one were in a cathedral, and then cathedral and city and people all vanished.*"

Most of the rest of this letter was concerned with plans for moving camp and hunting gazelles and having hot water laid on to my tent, for Fontaine les Gazelles was, as I explained, "really one of Afric's fountains, and hot." I was pleased to look forward to unlimited baths, without feeling, as one must

always feel when one has a bath in the desert, that one is guilty of the sort of extravagance that one blames in Marie Antoinette when one reads that she used to have a bath in champagne; and the desert was getting very lonely, perhaps affected by that depression that must always be the aftermath of achievement, for I had got the big head of which I had dreamed, off and on for nine years.

CHAPTER XIII

FROM THE DESERT TO DREAMS AND LONDON

BEFORE I MOVED TO WHAT I CALLED MY STEAM-HEATED CAMP I HAD SOME more shooting. One day I devoted to philanthropy rather than sport and shot a jackal, for jackals are the enemies of the flocks of the nomads. He was sitting on a rock howling to call the rest to share in a sheep he had killed. On the way we met a snake called the naja, which Si Amar asked me to shoot, as it was too big for sticks or stones, a beast hooded like a cobra, but much larger. Si Amar prepared the skin with great care, but when I got it back to England it was stolen. I wrote on 26th November: "*One more day and two nights in this camp which is haunted by the ghosts of two rivers; then we turn homewards. I went out to-day and got a mouflon in a wild ravine at the back of the mountains.*"

On 27th November I wrote: "*To-day after going over the mountains Si Amar picked up a mouflon at a great distance. He brought me very close, but owing to a moment's hesitation as to whether it was a male or a female I unaccountably missed a very close shot. Then he galloped and I fired again but without success, and my third shot got him like a rabbit. He is about equal to my third biggest.*"

The desert was now getting cold, which the Arabs dislike very much indeed. And on 28th November we made a very long march, and came to Fontaine les Gazelles. There we hunted for some days in a queer mountain made mostly of salt, with bright ravines in it which must be something like those of Colorado, except that they are only one or two hundred feet deep. And the landscape was mostly bright red and grey and yellow. But I was too close to the edge of civilization, and in five days there I shot nothing. By night I used to have a bath in a hot pond, where on the first night I was rather surprised to hear the sounds of heavy breathing quite near me, which I found came from a tortoise. As the bath was very hot, and the wind freezing, I made a pile of brushwood and straw near the edge, and lit it by throwing lighted matches from the bath, and only came out when it was well alight; for I had learned by experience that coming out of a hot bath into the air of the desert at night can be rather chilling. One day we moved to the railway, and close to the station we lit a fire and I had my last cup of

tea in the desert. My rough diary of those days ends with the words: “Where next?”

Next day at Al Kantara I said farewell to Si Amar. May his date-crop thrive if he still dwells under his palm-trees, or may his Paradise be all that he hoped.

Here in Ireland these heads now hang on my wall. How easy it seems to shoot such a large animal, without his precipices, without the invisibility that he always has in the sunlight, and without those different chances that attend every stalk, and of which all sport is mainly constructed. But valuing my trophies by the difficulty of acquiring them, as well as by their actual beauty, I put the Barbary sheep amongst the best that I have, and I reflect that to get the heads that I shot in three trips to North Africa, I probably walked over fifty miles for each one.

By Christmas Eve I was in Ireland shooting snipe and woodcock, and different kinds of duck, and rarely a goose, which is in Ireland, at least to me, what the Barbary sheep is in North Africa or the lion in Kenya. And I got some fox-hunting with the Meath, which always went on, whatever the state of the country. Of Ireland in those days I have told something in a novel called *Up in the Hills,* whose pages I will not purloin for this book. The view about Ireland in England, among those that had any view, was that all that was hoped from “the Treaty” had been accomplished. I will say nothing here to take away that hope, because if you take away his hope from a man you never know what he mayn’t put in its place.

On one day of March and seven of April, not consecutive, I now completed a play called *Lord Adrian,* of which I had written the first act in Paris on my way to the Sahara. Besides hunting with the Meath I also had an occasional day with my son’s harriers, which he had worked up into a good pack, beginning with whatever dogs he could get together. When spring came we went to Kent, and there on 10th May I started on a very hard piece of work which was to occupy much of my time for the rest of that year. I suppose that most of us have roving spirits, and whatever was roving in mine was well satisfied by the Ouled Zian mountains, and by Median Mountain standing out in the desert a little away from them; but now the spirit roved as my body sat in a chair, and I wrote a book of the length of a novel, which was nearer to verse than most that I have written, and at this rhythmic level I tried to keep it all the way, which of course meant that the fancies which I shaped to these rhythms had also to be of the

nature of poetry. It was seventy thousand words of very hard work, and was not finished till 5th March in the following year. At the same time I continued my ordinary life, for one cannot sit still day and night in a chair; and my ordinary life was, as I may have indicated already, to shoot rabbits with a rifle and play cricket in the summer, and to shoot geese, snipe and woodcock in the winter, and every now and then to shoot larger game at the end of a long journey. I also shot partridges at Shoreham (Kent) with my dear old friend Sir Roger Gregory, and we went again in the partridge-season to Helperby and I had some days hunting with the Meath. I wonder, as I write these words, though I have never reflected upon it, whether all writing could be divided into two kinds, writing done by men living, like Dr. Johnson, amongst thought and conversation in cities, and the work by those like Tolstoy whose life is mainly in the deeps of the country. One might expect a distinct difference between the work of these two kinds of men, which investigation would probably never bear out. As a matter of fact some of my *King of Elfland's Daughter,* as I called the book that I was writing now, was written in the invigorating air of London, though all my visions of it were purely rural. I think the air of all capitals is invigorating: they probably would not have been capitals otherwise. While in London I should have done far more work were it not for the Beefsteak Club, which was the greatest counter-attraction to lonely work that I have known. The noise of the traffic was not disturbing, and in any case there was very little of it in Cadogan Square, where we lived, but on account of its quiet this square was much haunted by barrel-organs; for those that like barrel-organs can hear them clearly there, while those that prefer quiet are likely to pay a high price for it and to pay the organist well to go away. I found that a gramophone could be a very good active defence against such noises, in addition to which with a gramophone you can choose your own tunes, instead of having to rely on the choice of the heir of the Italian organ-grinder and his monkey. Some of the records that I used to protect me from external noise were a real inspiration to me as I wrote, Elgar, whom I first met at the Literary Society, a dining club to which we both belonged, was going to write some music for a certain part of this book; I don't know if he ever did, but I believe not. One thing that I liked about Elgar was the natural simplicity with which he regarded his genius; he never boasted of it and never doubted it; his attitude was somewhat that of a child who has got a bird of paradise in the poultry yard at home; it is strange that it should have

got there, but there it is. One day as we were walking to his flat, where he was going to show me in his microscope a bit of Atlantic ooze which is forming the floor of the ocean now, as once our chalk hills were formed, we passed a house to which Elgar pointed and told me of an organization that used to be there in the last war. “My wife and I felt we ought to do something to help,” he said, “and she had a heavy Indian bracelet for the arm, made of solid gold, an heirloom in her family. So we decided to give that, and I took it there, and told the man at the door what I’d come to give.”

But the man at the door had said, “We can only accept cash or gold here.” And Elgar had said: “But it is gold, purer than eighteen carat.”

“Well, we couldn’t go to the expense of testing it to see,” said the man. So Elgar took it home again.

It is possible that, without either of them being aware of it, there was the slight antipathy that the man of genius feels for the iron-clamped official mind looking only in one direction, and the answering antipathy that the ordered mind at attention on its parade-ground feels for the free and roving mind that gazes in all directions and travels wherever it gazes, the antipathy that the trained retriever has for the fox and for all that wear no collar. If so, Elgar may have been a little hard on the doorkeeper, springing this huge piece of gold on him without the little word of warning that would have explained everything. No doubt I should have done the same myself; but I think I should have been wrong.

Well, all that winter I went on with the life that was active in two worlds. Probably everyone resides to some extent in two worlds; many a man for instance works every evening in a garden, who has done very different work in a town all the rest of the day; and I was digging now very hard in the garden of dreams, as well as enjoying the sport of Irish bogs and fox-coverts, though I shot or hunted on many more days than I wrote. Perhaps in Ireland the two worlds are not far apart, for one night on a bog where I was sitting for geese, and at a time when I had been writing of will-o’-the-wisps, I saw one of them, though for the only time in my life.

CHAPTER XIV

THE EXCITEMENTS OF CHESS

THE EFFORT OF WRITING "THE KING OF ELFLAND'S DAUGHTER' SEEMS to have been greater than any other I made, for I wrote no more for a year; though that year included two other pieces of hard work, a chess tournament, and a trip up the Nile after big game to about a thousand miles above Khartoum. The chess tournament was one of the tournaments held in Dublin in the summer of 1924 in connection with what were called the Tailteann Games, and the one that I entered for was the Major Tournament. I had played very little chess for many years and, though it was known in Kent that I sometimes played and I was the president of the Kentish Chess Association, as I still am, it was not known in Ireland. Indeed I rather avoided chess, for there is no doubt that it can completely fill a man's life-time, as is widely recognized in a kind of a way by all who say of chess champions of the world, as they often do, "But what I mean is, does he ever do anything else?" A remark never made about field-marshals, although chess and strategy so very closely resemble each other. But now I entered for the Major Tournament. I think I may have been partly goaded to do it because, when Gogarty had without telling me and out of pure kindness entered one of my books for another competition in the Tailteann Games, and, being always closely in touch with what was going on in Dublin, told me that I was going to get the first prize, a man with more influence than Gogarty, but less generosity, had got to hear of it, and I got neither first, second nor third prize nor a mention. It may have been then that in a moment of petulance I said, "I will enter for something the result of which he cannot possibly control."

And so I decided to compete in chess, and chose the Major Tournament. Sometimes people have discussed the advantages and disadvantages of a title. In the theatre, and indeed in all kinds of work, I have found it of the greatest disadvantage; and all critics who have concentrated on the cover of a book, where the writing is large and clear and is quickly read, have been inclined to take the line that here was an aristocratic idler designing to take the bread out of the mouths of honest men. But in this chess tournament a title was of the greatest use to me. At this time peers were pretty generally

supposed to be of a very low mental standard: and, as I had played no chess in Ireland, the chessplayers now assembled in Dublin had only this supposition to guide them. Anything they may have found out later was discovered too late. But at the beginning I was utterly out of practice, and terribly ignorant of the openings, and any little handicap in my favour was greatly appreciated by me. I may say that anyone who has not carefully studied the openings, although having no harder work to do at the beginning than in any other part of the game, is nevertheless playing then against the wisdom of the ages, and has for the first ten moves or so to pit his brains against some dead master's, instead of against those of an equal player. We played in two sections, and the best three of each section were to qualify for the final tournament, in which everyone was to play the other five of the six. Opponents were chosen by lot, and it must not be thought for a moment that I suggest that any political consideration had any weight with this lot, but the South were at that time very anxious to keep in with the North, and it seemed a lucky coincidence that a Northern competitor should have been drawn for his first game against one who it might be hoped was of feeble intellect. During the interval for lunch all chess-players on such occasions always do more analysing of their adjourned game than eating, and the northern player seeing then that the position was hopeless, and that he could not beat even me, went back to the North that afternoon in disgust. Of course the game was marked up to me as a win, but it was not credited to me for the purposes of the tournament, as he and the one game that he had played were cancelled, and I had gained nothing but a little practice. I only just got into the final; and then the hard fight began, as I had to play against some of the best players in Ireland. I stayed at home, twenty miles from Dublin, where we had a young house-party for the Horse Show, and I went up to Dublin every day, reading up openings as I went. The whole thing took a fortnight, and I have seldom spent a fortnight at harder work, and of that hard work perhaps the hardest day was a day on which I played with Mr. Sayers. Our game was the last to finish, and all the principal Irish chess-players were looking on, and were kind enough to applaud when we finished. Another hard day I had was against Mr. Orr, the only surviving player from the North, whom nobody could beat and against whom I got a draw. All of the rest I had now beaten except Mr. Varian, whom I had still to play, and whom rumour made out to be the most redoubtable. If I drew with him I should win the tournament, but if I lost I should be only equal with

him and Mr. Orr, and I was very much afraid of him until we started playing. He played with extraordinary brilliance, and almost immediately had a great advantage, but I said to myself, "This is unsound," and I sat and waited for what I thought was his eccentric opening to break down. It did not, however, break down, and it was a long time before I was able to turn the tables and finally win. This easily gave me the first prize, and a silver-gilt medal with the head of Queen Tailtea on it, who has been dead too many thousand years for me to know if it is like her. I went first to Gogarty's house, who also had a party for the Horse-Show, and found his kindness, which can always be relied on, ready with sympathetic words of condolence; but, when he found they were not needed, I found this brilliant conversationalist for the first time in my life without very much to say. When I got home our house-party were in a mood to bet on the result: I was tired after the desperate work of that fortnight, and perhaps even depressed by the feeling of the loss of that splendour that goes from all prizes when we get our hands on them, so that they hardly guessed which way it had gone till I told them. My wife says that then they all cheered, but that I don't remember. After this tournament I was made president of the Irish Chess Association, which amongst other things brought me often into contact with the two men whose names appear more frequently than any others in the list of chess champions of Ireland, Mr. O'Hanlon and Mr. Cranston, and it is always very pleasant to meet them. Let me say this one thing about chess to those that do not play it: a blind man can hear something of a football match, but he can never quite estimate the vigour, the speed or the skill of the players and so can never quite realize the excitement of the game. Watching a game of chess we are all blind; for, except a few whose imagination serves as very strong glasses to see into the minds of the players, we cannot see the exciting thoughts that flash rapidly to and fro, until a move is made, placing something visible occasionally before us, as the boom of a football kicked into the goal comes now and then to the ears of the blind man.

And while I am on the subject of chess I may say that now and then during the years of which I have been writing I made a chess problem and used to send them to Mr. E. Tinsley, for many years the chess editor of *The Times Literary Supplement,* whose cheery presence was never absent from any important match in or near London. I followed some principles in these problems which will be readily understood even by those who do not play

chess. My first principle was that it should look childishly easy, my next, but still more important, was that an examination of it should make it appear entirely impossible, and then if I could add a little humour to the situation I was content. All puzzles may be approached in this manner. A good many of the problems that I sent to Mr. Tinsley and that he reproduced in *The Times Literary Supplement* were "White to play and mate in one move," fulfilling the first two conditions that I have mentioned, and that it could be done at all under these conditions perhaps fulfilled the third. The following brief sentence is only for chess-players: one day I invented a new theme in a castling problem, and how very new it was will be appreciated by chess-players, though perhaps scarcely believed by them, when I say that it was even new to Mr. T. R. Dawson. A couple of years later than the year of which I now tell I collected some of these and (hoping that their published solutions would have been forgotten) offered a prize of half a dozen snipe to any members of the Kentish Chess Association who would solve them, for I have always felt that a president should do a little more to justify himself than merely to ornament note-paper; and I tried to amuse the members of the principal Dublin chess club in the same way. What the builder of the labyrinth in Crete was to men's feet Mr. Hubert Phillips is to-day to their thoughts, and among his intricacies he has printed six of these problems in his *Week End Problem Book,* published in 1932. Mine also was the puzzle in that book about how to build a square house with its walls all facing south; as well as something about Big Ben. My problems appeared there in great company, for they follow one of Sam Loyd's, the American problemist, who might well be called the leader of all whose avocation was to puzzle mankind, in comparison with whose chess-problems and other puzzles, to tell what Hitler is going to do next is merely a childish exercise.

CHAPTER XV

TO THE WILDS ONCE MORE

I PASSED THE REST OF 1924 WITH A LITTLE FOX-HUNTING AND MORE shooting, and we went to Arden and Helperby, and I shot with neighbours in Kent and Ireland; and what is sometimes called the wanderlust came on me again, and I set out for the wilds, this time by way of Cairo and Khartoum. I set off one morning from our London house, in a taxi so slow that for a while I feared for my connections all the way to Khartoum. The number of people killed in the streets was mounting rapidly in those days and I referred to this taxi in a letter to my wife as: "*The world's slowest taxi, (the Safety Award* 1907; *the Pedestrians Cup* 1908, 1909, 1910, *The Royal Humane Society's First Prize* 1911)." But I caught the train from Victoria all right. At Marseilles I was given the dreadful information that in the North of France houses that had had four or five rooms were now being rebuilt with only two, because they feared another war! I wrote from the S.S. *Malwa* on 10th January, 1925: "*One needs a sea-voyage to rest after the train de luxe. It is very comfortable here. I suddenly saw Corsica a little while before sunset. It was like a smoke below, and above was a great company of mountains, covered with snow and looking no more material than clouds, and gradually growing pinker. The sea was all light blue like the evening star. The portholes at tea-time were frames for pictures of the sky, all yellow except for a little blue at top and some orange below; then the light-blue sea, more like the evening star than ever, heaved slowly up the lower half of them to a very gentle roll.*"

And next day we passed Stromboli "smoking lazily, with undesirable building sites well occupied, with two or three dotted rows of little white houses."

And I reflected then, as I have often since, that though half the island has quite evidently at one time been blown away, those houses are no more dangerously placed than are houses in Belgium or Northern France.

My letter mentions plenty of chess, as always happens on ships, and "*a line of pale-lilac African mountains a little to the right of the sunset.*" And later I recorded, "*At* 6 *a in there began that shouting or song which, as you know, is necessary to coal a ship.*" And soon we landed at Port Said, "*and I*

received a certificate of health for 3.1. 2*d from an important-looking official who mistook a half-crown for a florin in a quietly dignified manner.*"

My next letter, 15th January, told of a visit to the mosque of Mahomet Ali, and to another mosque "*with beautiful high thin elaborate alcoves outside and an extraordinarily beautiful dome inside inlaid with dark lilac and gold above, and light blue and gold lower down, with a patch of dark blue and gold at the very top. And I went again to see the old blue mosque, to reach which from the second we drove (a fly and a pair of horses) through about a mile of a lane through the Arab quarter, in which to my surprise, we often passed carts, though I don't know how.*

"*I hear from Cook that I can't enter the Sudan without a permit and I can't get a permit because they go to sleep at the Agency herefrom noon on, and I found them closed at two. So I've left the absurd business to Cook, who will find them at an hour when he knows they wake to-morrow. I've been to the Museum. I got into the mummy-room on my way to Tut-Ankh-Amen's furniture and, among all the poor attempts to cheat death, only a Princess Sitamon escaped obvious failure, for there were some long wrappings and underneath was written 'False mummy found in tomb of Princess Sitamon.' Perhaps she loved a subject of a dynasty that did not permit such marriages, and perhaps she arranged a funeral and then went away to the hills, and by now her death may be presumed, but there is no record of it.*

"*Tut-Ankh-Amen had a wooden box entirely covered with worked gold, and he had a very attractive design on his bed, two humble lions waiting on a very important lion whose mouth is open in a sort of superior contentment and his tongue hanging out.*"

As a house with all its bricks is taken out of the earth, so one's imagination is probably made of everything one has seen, and by a few more things seen by our ancestors, all arranged and irradiated by forces of which we know nothing, and few of the sources we are ever able to trace; but Princess Sitamon was certainly the origin of a tale that I wrote when the memory of the false mummy had simmered for five years in my mind, and that I called *A Daughter of Rameses.* In 1941, sixteen years after the year of which I now tell, I read it at a party in Cairo, whence the idea had come.

In Cairo I enquired of the first dragoman who found me, a stately, tall, bearded Arab, for news of a dragoman I had known, named Ibrahim, who

lived at Gizeh. But my dragoman told me he was dead. I was very sorry to hear this. “Ah,” said the Arab, “it comes to all. A man may be strong as a lion and swift as a gazelle, yet he goes the same path with all of us.”

Later I met my old friend at Gizeh. “I would have come before,” I said, “but I enquired of you from a dragoman in Cairo....”

“He probably said I was dead,” said Ibrahim. “Well, as a matter of fact he did,” I told him. But I needn’t have said so, for Ibrahim knew dragomans and their ways, being one himself. When I returned in 1941 the story was true, and yet I could almost imagine at times that it was not, for his son prospers there in his place and is very like his father, and both resemble a scribe at the court of one of those dynasties, whose portait in stone I have seen.

I started South in the evening, and reached Aswan next day somewhere about sunset. The temple of Philae, in whose courts I had walked, was now at the bottom of a lake, on whose surface bloomed great lotuses of stone, the tops of the pillars of the temple. For the next two or three days we had a delightful journey by steamer up the river, and though one of the staff said to me, deprecatingly of the dinner, “Cook, he no great business,” the catering was good and everything comfortable. One night we came, just before dawn, to that stupendous temple, Abu Simbul, carved out of the hill, whose long aisle and narrow door are aimed at the sunrise, so that on midsummer’s day dawn entered the dark of the hill and shone on the altar. But it was winter now, and dawn far away to the South. Not only that, but the world, which spins like a tired top, has moved its wobbling axis so far since the temple was built that, even at midsummer now, the sun does not shine at dawn straight on to the midst of the altar, where four gods sit waiting for it. Yet still the dawn would have stolen up to the temple wall and led the four statues of Rameses out of the night and peered through the door and come a little way in, were it not for a dream-destroying glare of electric lights with which it is customary there to spoil both the dawn and the last of the stars.

We came to Wady Haifa and got into a train, and I wrote to my wife: “*We are passing through a country well watered by mirage, and dwarf mountains sit reflected in illusion*.” And later: “*The sun has set under the desert, and there is the great circle round us that I know in the Sahara, and bitterly cold though it is at a station that we have just stopped at, it looks as though it might be pleasant if one had a small camp on the sand and some*

sort of a fire." For I can never see the desert without feeling the lure of it. Next day we passed all day by big acacia bushes, upon which camels were grazing, on one side of the train: on the other side was wild desert. And in the evening we came to Khartoum. There I was most hospitably entertained by Sir George and Lady Schuster. He was at that time in charge of the finances of the Sudan. We used to dine on their lawn under the palm-trees, up which mauve convolvulus climbed, and there were roses there, which were in every garden, and which probably helped English people to remember England in the midst of that huge desert, though they always withered by the end of January. At this time I knew nothing of Beethoven's symphonies, which for anyone interested in any of the arts is a deficiency as deplorable as for a mountaineer never to have seen the Himalayas. Of this sad ignorance Sir George Schuster cured me, by sending Beethoven up the river with me, and if there is anything impossible in this I don't know what we mean when we call Beethoven immortal. I had a small gramophone and he gave me the whole of the Seventh Symphony. I bought several other records in Khartoum, and a box of gramophone needles, but the shopman never delivered them in time, and I steamed up the Nile with only the gramophone and the Seventh Symphony. Luckily the lack of the gramophone needles did not matter, as Africa grows such things more abundantly than Europe grows grass, and I found that mimosa thorns did very well. And so I first got to know the Seventh Symphony, and to this day whenever I hear it I think of the Nile and the storms of that windy river, that at times almost shouted down my mimosa needles.

CHAPTER XVI

ON AFRICAN RIVERS

I HIRED A STEAMER AND STARTED UP THE RIVER FROM KHARTOUM EARLY on 23rd January, 1925. I shot a few crocodiles on the mudbanks, and on 26th January we came to a country in which there were rufifrons gazelles, but the species was new to me and I was not yet able to tell a good head from a bad one, and so, though I got within shot of some, I did not fire. In the evening we came to Renk, where at the end of a little path that ran down to the river the District Commissioner lived, and looked after the affairs of Dinkas; this was almost the last white man that the engineer and I were to see for most of our journey. Actually he was the last but one; but, when I came to the very last, I had been shooting for some days among burnt reeds, and every reed had left a gray mark on my khaki jacket, and when you meet a man briefly you must judge him partly by his clothes, because they are what are seen first. And so the final white man on that river and I never got to know each other quite so well as the friendly District Commissioner and I did. Among other kindnesses he got a hunter for me, who went on board there and then, Issa el Nuer, and a very good hunter he was. I don't know what he was doing there, for the Nuer country is further South; probably arrangements had been made from Khartoum, but that I don't remember. He wore a number of charms that dangled from a little bracelet high up on his left arm; and a little lower down, but above the elbow, in case these should ever fail him, he wore a knife. In East Africa one always wore a hunting knife from a belt hanging in the small of one's back, but Issa el Nuer and his friends rightly thought that it could be much quicker got at where he wore it, as both arms could be brought together and the right hand would have but a short way to go. It seemed to me that it was the better method; but if anything should happen to one's right arm the East African way would come into its own. I had no hunting knife myself, because I had intended to buy one in Khartoum, having mislaid my old one, but was astonished to find that the only kind they had there had to be pulled out of its handle and unfolded and neatly fixed in again at the other end. But in the end I never needed one. The District Commissioner at Renk told me of a hunter of his own who had as many charms as Issa; he had a text out of

the Koran in a little leather satchel such as all Mahommedans wear, a small crucifix, and a bit of wood blessed by a witch-doctor which had come from a tree that had been blasted by lightning. One day he had asked him why he wore the emblems of so many different religions, and the hunter had replied: “In things like that you can never be too careful.”

There I was first shown ambach wood, the lightest wood in the world and, though from the outside it looks like any other wood, one man could easily carry the trunk of any tree of it for which there was room on his shoulder. I said good-bye to the District Commissioner and walked down his path to the river lined by two row’s of such trees as could be got to grow there, and we went on up the river with the shikari and two gun-bearers who had also kindly been found for me. Our ship wooded in sight of a mountain called Mohammed Aga, and that was on latitude 11. Next day I met the Dinkas in one of their villages, a cluster of domed huts with doors built on the Eskimo fashion, small things into which they had to crawl, though the Eskimo’s enemy is the cold, and the Dinka’s the lion. The full dress of a Dinka is a feather in his hair and a necklace of blue beads round his neck; I never saw any of them wear anything more, unless you count as a suit of clothes a mixture mostly made of grey ash with which they smear themselves to keep off the mosquitoes. That day I landed and went after tiang, a reddish beast with a black face, like a rather thin cow, a member of the hartebeeste family. He also was new to me, like the rufifrons gazelle, and again I failed to get a shot through not knowing whether the head was big enough. I was wearing dark glasses, very good things to wear in the tropics, but I should have changed them at sunset, for the light rapidly fades, and just then I came on a roan antelope, which is in any case a dark shadowy beast, and I missed it. Deeply depressed by doing that, I suddenly had complete consolation by finding that it was a female. On the way back to the ship my hunter showed me a guinea-fowl, using the Arabic word for it, which I knew, though I knew no word of his Nuer language, and I fired more accurately at it than I had done at the roan, with my.350 rifle. I started out after breakfast next day at 4.30 to look for buffalo, which some Dinkas had promised to show us, but no buffaloes appeared. In the afternoon I got a tiang and a white-eared cob; and we went on and came to the country of the Shillooks, and that night we tied up at Malakal under some oleanders. Next day the Shillooks in their long canoes were on the river in large numbers. And presently we passed a place where they were all gathered, dressed in

their full dress, which was a great deal more than the Dinkas'. For one of their chiefs had died and they had gathered to bury him. I wrote to my wife on 21st January: "*We passed by a herd of about seventeen hippoes in the water yesterday, but it was hard to count them, because they were never all up together. I see how they came by their name: their heads heave up out of the river now and then like the heads of monstrous horses*." And the letter continues on 2nd February: "*Yesterday I got a reed-buck, but the various pursuits of that day are too numerous to recount. To-day I started off at sunrise and am just back after getting two water-buck.... Yesterday unfortunately I wounded a tiang, being too full of quinine. I never got him, but in following him I came on a reedbuck and got him. We went on up the river and presently they all saw a lion near the bank and a leopard running behind him, so we stopped the ship and got after him. The leopard got up almost under our feet and hopped away a few yards into a long thin strip of high grass, into which the shikari went to put him up like a woodcock, but I would not allow that, nor did I go myself. The strip of high grass was only ten yards wide and two or three hundred long. The leopard was lying down there and the lion must be with him; so after reflection and advice I got matches and we burned the strip of grass, while I sat outside it with my*.470, *and my shot-gun on the ground beside me, and — for the matter of that — my*.350, *though there couldn't have been time for all three. But somehow the lion and leopard had got away and we never saw them any more. Soon we stopped again, this time for a water-buck which through slight fatigue, for I had been hunting off and on since early dawn, and much quinine, I missed*."

We were now on a lonely river, and a strange river, for the Bahr-el-Zeraf rises in marshes just beside the White Nile, or the Bahr-el-Jebel as it is named in those parts, so close that a canal has actually been cut joining the two rivers; and then it flows away to the North and goes into the White Nile again. We steered the whole length of this marshy lonely river and came again to the White Nile after four days. On 5th February I wrote: "*We are on a better river now, the Bahr-el-Jebel, but the papyrus continues as far as the eye can see.*"

I don't remember now what was the cause of the awful feeling of loneliness with which the Bahr-el-Zeraf oppressed me: it can hardly have been its marshes, for there were marshes everywhere. Perhaps it was

quinine, or perhaps it was the virus of the anopheles mosquito with which the quinine was successfully fighting in the battlefield of my blood. It may be of passing interest to notice, what first became clear to me on that river, the name of the giraffe when he is at home. It is obviously zeraf, or ziraffe, and then the French, who seem to have travelled ahead of us all over the world, even to India, had made a shot at the spelling by replacing the Arabic Z with a French G. The French G is soft, and so not so far from Z; but when we copied the French name for it with our harder G we got a long way from the original name, and the giraffe in the Zoo sounds almost a different family from the zeraf of the lands he knew.

We now turned down the Nile, or the Bahr-el-Jebel as they call it there: "*We reached Lake No out of the Bahr-el-Jebel a few hours after nightfall on 6 th February. Yesterday morning I went ashore at* 6 *and after a few hundred yards we met a marsh. Soon the shikari went on ahead and got deeper and deeper, walking amongst blue water-lilies, and there seemed nothing for it but to turn back. This we did, but then I saw some trees in the distance, and to go back to the ship meant to lose the morning's shoot, so I tried again and we got through and came to dry land. At about nine we saw three reed-buck a long way off, so we crouched down amongst low half-burnt reeds and watched them, but they were moving slowly and I saw that they would soon cross the line of our wind, so we had to move on a bit and, seeing no better chance, I took a shot at over three hundred yards and saw the bullet hit up dust, showing that it must have passed just underneath him, and as he jumped once or twice it must have just touched his fur. So I fired again, aiming higher still, and dropped him stone dead at about* 330 *yards.*

"*Then we left Lake No and got into the Bahr-el-Gazal, after first walking back with the head and some meat of the reed-buck through the blue water-lilies, of which we picked a bunch. Soon that great prize a Mrs. Grey's waterbuck was seen; the bank was bounded by deep marshes and reeds over our heads; through these we went some way till the shikari showed me the horns and part of the head of the Mrs. Grey. I aimed at where I thought the body was, but never having seen one before, and having just been shooting at reed-buck, had no idea what a big beast he was. The bullet went over him and away he went, a fine beast with magnificent horns. They signalled from the ship that another had gone another way, and the pursuit of the second one added to our great discomforts, and after a while we*

toiled back to the steamer not having seen any more of this Mrs. Grey and having missed the other. I took off my wet things and, having a headache, went to bed. In little more than ten minutes more Mrs. Grey were sighted, on the other bank, a mile away on the edge of the dry land. A sailor went into the marsh and was soon up to his neck, and Mr. Smyth, the engineer, said it couldn't be done. But I said I would, and so began about the biggest stalk of my life. After a bare quarter of a mile we lost bottom and the rushes began to sink, their roots no longer supporting us. The shikari alone went on like a will-o'-the-wisp, but neither I nor my gun-bearers could follow, and a gun-bearer who tried went smilingly up to his neck and had not found bottom even then, so I gave him a hand back. Meanwhile I had sent back to the ship for two oars, and I suppose we all stood there with water over our hips for more than half an hour.

"*The man that I sent for oars not only brought them, but two of the sailors also came with pules. With these we got over the worst places, till we came at last to high reeds amongst which the depth of water was fairly regular and we were seldom up to our waists. Cover was perfect, and at long last we came near to the edge of the swamp and could see the Mrs. Grey through the reeds easier than they could see us. I chose and fired, and he dropped so suddenly that none of the herd moved. And when he was skinned and cut up for meat the return journey began, and we were cheery enough to ignore the tiny thorns that sometimes strike one in showers and remain in one's skin. On this day I had two breakfasts, but missed my lunch. Tea and dinner we had at the usual hours.*

"*We anchored in mid-stream so as not to waste good country in bad light, and at eight this morning we steamed on and soon saw white-eared cob. We landed, as usual in a marsh, and when we'd gone ten yards through the high reeds my shikari stopped and put his slippers on, which he takes off for water. I interpreted this as a precaution against a snake, and so it was, but such a snake as could have eaten him as well with his slippers on as off, a nineteen-foot python with his head rested on one of his hugest folds looking at us with big yellow eyes. I aimed between his eyes, but aimed low so as to make missing impossible, and my*.350 *bullet went through the top of the great fold that his head was resting on, and on through his neck. They called to the steamer for a spear before actually handling him and, as a precaution, my shikari put its wide blade through the neck, but it wasn't*

necessary. Then I went on after the white-eared cob. We got out of the marsh fairly soon and only crossed a narrow one further on, and later we came to a hard, burnt plain fill of pits that had been made by the feet of elephants before it was dry. And I fired many inaccurate shots and got the white-eared cob that I was after, a better head than my first.

"*8th February. We anchored here and I went out again at* 4.30 *and got two white-eared cob, one equal to the one in the morning, one much bigger. This makes four, the limit for white-eared cob.*

"9.45 *a m. We saw a small herd of waterbuck with one very big male, and I've just been ashore and got him. We steamed past him about a quarter of a mile and then stalked back on him. For the first time for some time I got ashore dry. It is a lovely head.*

Last night there was a full moon, and we heard the hippos roaring; possibly Another came near us, for at one moment our donkeys panicked. Bag so far: 1 Mrs. Grey, 1 *Python,* 4 *white-eared Cob,* 2 *Reed-buck,* 1 *Tiang,* 4 *Waterbuck.* 5 *p m. We are going through papyrus swamps again, probably the least explored part of the earth.*"

There are pictures from that time that remain very clear in my memory, without the need of referring to old letters, and one is the eyes of the python, which I described in my letter as yellow, but which were rather orange and the colour of flame. I remember Issa el Nuer, who was in front of me on a sort of track through the marshes where the water was only up to our knees, stopping and putting his shoes on and turning to me and saying, "We can't go any further. You must shoot."

I did not know a word of his language, but I understood clearly enough what he was saying, and the python looked at us like an evil face leaning on folded arms, for that was the way his head rested on one of his huge coils. And I remember the blue water-lilies growing all round us, which did not survive half an hour in a glass of water when we got them back to the ship; and my shot through the curtain of reeds at the big antelope after my long stalk; and the curious food that these animals were eating, which was date-stones which were lying on the ground near the marks of an old camp-fire. And very clearly indeed I remember Issa el Nuer standing beside me with his spear lifted, when we were burning the reeds into which the lion had gone, to protect me, who was armed with two rifles.

CHAPTER XVII

FROM THE BAHR EL ARAB TO LUXOR

ON 11TH FEBRUARY, 1925, I WROTE TO MY WIFE:— "*We Went out of the Bahr-el-Gazal on the 9th and up the Bahr-el-Arab, where I landed and went inland at 3 pm and got a fine Mrs. Gray and got back soon after sunset. That makes two, my limit for Mrs. Gray, not on one license only but for a lifetime. The only fly in the ointment was that though my second head was magnificent I saw a larger one ten minutes later. Yesterday after a wild-goose chase from dawn till eleven we left the Bahr-el-Arab.*"

In the Bahr-el-Gazal I met the late Duke of Orleans, the rightful King of France, who passed in another steamer, and the two ships stopped alongside and we talked for a while. He was a very fine figure of *le roi en exile,* bearded, in khaki shirt and shorts, and wearing a cummerband that was the colour of the blue in the French tricolour, or brighter: above his right elbow he wore two big gold bracelets, and his arms were entirely tattooed.

A few days down the Bahr-el-Gazal and we came again to Lake No, which I remember lying like a huge opal in the evening, the silence of it broken by the resounding crashes of a fish about the size of a man, which every now and then leaped out of it. And from Lake No we came back to the White Nile and the north wind. On 13th February I wrote to my wife: "*We have been wrecked rather more seriously than usual, in fact we should have gone down if we had not had our barge, which is tied alongside, to roll over on to instead of the bottom of the river. It was the North wind again. After which I see that we are not facing* '*the elements*' *any more for the present, but are staying where the North wind put us.*"

On 14th September I came to Fashoda, whose name has by an extreme delicacy of tact been removed from the map and the name of Kodok substituted. At a place called Zarzoor I got a rufifrons gazelle, an animal that one often finds with pale yellow horns, dusted with the bloom of the mimosa among which it lives. But it was buffalo that we wanted, and my shikari knew of a place where they might be met and, having decided that he was speaking honestly, I placed reliance on him, which the engineer thought was rather too much for a mere savage, and I decided that we would go just where Issa el Nuer said. The engines worked very badly that

day, and the upshot of it was that the shikari was perfectly right, and as we arrived at the spot he had named there was an enormous herd of buffalo only a thousand yards from the shore. They looked at the steamer and pawed the ground and the dust floated up far over them. There was one enormous head among them.

But then the sun set: we were just too late. By the time I had done the thousand yards over very rough country the brief light would have gone and I could not have seen my foresight; so we decided to go at dawn next day, which we did and followed their tracks for eight hours, and the tracks of a lion that was following them, but they had moved right out of that part of the country, and I never saw them again. If I did not describe great failures as well as successes, I should give a wrong impression of big-game-hunting. I shot another waterbuck that day, but it did not console me.

We went on down the river, shooting more tiang and rufifrons and two roan antelope and some crocodiles, and hearing rumours of lions from the Dinkas and seeing the tracks of some that had drunk at night in the river and gone away before dawn; but I saw no more of them. One day a wart-hog came trotting out of the forest towards me, with the sun flashing on his tusks, and for some reason not seeing me: I fired and touched his shoulder, and still he came on and still seemed not to see me, for he never charged, as these animals usually do; and then I got him with a better shot. Later I shot another, and one of the two had very fine tusks.

In that strange river islands float, and I remember seeing a duck on its nest drifting down with its little island. Sometimes when we went ashore we used to meet men of various tribes, who used to greet me by laying down their spears before coming close, then lifting up the right hand, to show that it held no weapon, and then shaking hands. On one part of the river people lived on the bank in little towers of mud. When I was going up the river the last white man I met had been rather discouraging about the Bahr-el-Gazal, on account of some trouble that was thought to be brewing among the tribes there. But as he did not actually forbid me to go, which he had the power to do, I went, and I never had any difficulty. But a little while after I got home I read in the papers of trouble along the Bahr-el-Gazal, and of troops being sent there because of two magicians called Pok and Jek, who dwelt in a pyramid and were making the trouble. So their pyramid was shelled, and that stopped the trouble, as any reasonable man could see; but the military commander went further than that and, in order to stop more trouble being

made by Pok and Jek in the future, he blew up the pyramid. The British public, as the reader will remember, leaned much towards pacifism at that time and there must have been some fear that it would not stand the blowing up of the pyramid, so it was explained in the paper that the pyramid, having been hit by shells, was afterwards blown up because it was unsafe. Such consideration for Pok and Jek in spending all that gun-cotton in making their pyramid safe for them was surely the height of appeasement. We passed Malakal, where I meant to post some letters, but found there was no post leaving for a fortnight. We put my gun-bearers down at Renk and took my shikari back to his village, where he dwelt with the Selim tribe, who suffered much, as he told me, from snakes and scorpions, and asked me if I could give him any cure. So I gave him some crystals of permanganate, which I explained was better than snake-bite, but more violent than scorpions, and warned him only to use it in case of snakes, the least I could do for the man who had been prepared to protect me with a spear against a lion.

There was now no more to shoot, except geese along the banks of the river and sometimes I landed and shot some of these with my rifle, but, great prize that the goose is in Ireland, he cannot compete with the greater attractions of Africa. I had seen hundreds of hippoes, but I could never see any sport in shooting a hippo, and I have never fired at one of them in my life, or at a giraffe either, whatever men may be driven to do in defence of their cabbages when they try to grow them in gardens near the Nile and the hippoes come and roll in them.

And now desert began to appear again; and at the end of February we reached Khartoum, where I was again entertained by the Schusters.

One night we dined with the Governor at the Palace, high up on one of the walls of which is a tablet, where a staircase had once been, to commemorate the spot where Gordon had come out from his room and been killed. And all over the walls were fine trophies of the big game of the Soudan-.

Soon I was going northward again. Perhaps a letter written at the time from the desert and Nile may give a fresher picture of them, or rather a sketch, than my memory is able to give. I wrote: "*We are passing through a most frightful desert, and I am yearning to go back to it, or to any part of the wilds. My trip has been too short. Without a ship and with more loneliness it might have been as long as I wanted, perhaps, but as it is it has*

been too short. With the approach of evening the waters of illusion recede out of sight, but all the morning the scenery was worth seeing, slopes of the height of hills and of the construction of mountains reflected in lakes of illusion which sometimes steal up quite close to the railway. We were never out of sight of that dry water all the morning. I would sooner have my tent on the shore of those waters than be in this train."

That was on 2nd March. 1925; and on 3rd March I wrote: "*The Nile can show some rather beautiful scenery when one happens to see the cliffs or little mountains with their tops just hidden by the awning of the ship, and sunlight on them; they make a background for a mass of palm-trees which is hardly provided by heaps of rock and the sky, seen otherwise. I suppose they look then more as they would look at the foot of a picture which had no frame at the top, but ran into ten yards of brown canvas.*"

And from a ship that went down the river from Wady Haifa I continued the letter: "*This part of the journey, either way, is very pleasant. Trains cannot be. But I have no longer any part in the scenery, as 1 feel I have when I am with my rifle.*"

And the rest of that letter is full of two things, plans for another trip, and reflections on the small details that mean so much to one's comfort when one carries one's civilization, snail-like, with one, but that could not be of general interest.

At Shellal I got into a train and continued northwards; and as we came into Luxor station a sudden fancy came to me to see Tut-Ankh-Amen. So I got out of the train and stayed two or three days at Luxor. I seem to have been out of touch with the fashions, for I was more critical of them than I should be now, and wrote from an hotel at Luxor: "*I saw Karnak and some most amazing Winter-sport costumes on women. A few wear big-game-hunting kit, but most of them favour tobogganing clothes.*" Wherever I came, on this journey down the river, I was told the same thing, which was "It has been quite cool until last week." And always I had to ask "What is it now?" because I had no means of judging, after living on latitude 9, along which the Bahr-el-Gazal mostly flows. And everywhere they told me that it was now hot; but for me it was getting colder every day. During my brief stay at Luxor the station-master came to me, and appealed to me more and more pathetically to allow my portmanteau, which I had taken out of the train, to go on to Cairo, to which it had been booked, and where it now

ought to be. And when I saw that the system on which his trains ran was more to him than mere dress has ever been to me, and when he had made me understand how much the presence of my portmanteau in Luxor was upsetting it, I let the portmanteau go on to Cairo. Next day with two immemorial modes of travel that all travellers in Egypt know well, a dahabeyah, with its wing-like sails, and a donkey, I crossed the river and went to the winding valley beyond; and many kings and queens I met on the way, but they are well told of by Baedeker. I was going to see the tomb of Tut-Ankh-Amen, but no-one was allowed to see it without a permit and I had had some difficulty in getting one, but it had eventually come by wire from Cairo. To this wire my dragoman (for wherever a sightseer goes in Egypt he is accompanied by his dragoman and his shadow) attached a good deal of importance, and when we found a crowd about Tut-Ankh-Amen's door he advised that I should pass up my permit; this I did, and the land of Egypt and the tomb of Pharaoh evidently induced in me a somewhat biblical mood, which must have affected my style in the letter to my wife which described what then occurred, for I wrote, "*the sweating crowd was parted on my left hand and on my right, and I walked through dry.*

"*And four or five of us were let into the tomb down the slope and given about three minutes there, and we saw Tut-Ankh-Amen lying in his coffin, not a corpse without illusion, but the body as he desired it to appear, a form entirely of gold, lying calmly there gazing upwards. At the corners of the red-sandstone coffin were goddesses, carved in rather faint relief, with their arms stretched along the sides of it as far as they could reach, and wings on their arms.*" From Tut-Ankh-Amen and his lovely protective goddesses we went past the body of Amen-Hotep and the tomb of Seti and, climbing a small mountain, came down on the colonnade of Queen Hatatsoo's temple, and saw again the huge fallen statue of Rameses, whose sculptor had clearly inspired, thousands of years later, what is probably the finest sonnet that Shelley wrote. Past Memnon and past the opium-fields in full bloom we came back to the Nile. What a valley of dreams!

That evening, going on with my letter, I wrote: "I *went out to look at the sunset across the river, and drifted into Luxor temple again. A holy man was buried in the temple when they did not know it was a temple, the earthquake of B.C.* 27 *having, as they say, wrecked it; and a mosque was built over him. So just after I entered the temple I saw a man come out on a green balcony*

of a small white tower at the end of the colonnade of papyrus pillars and walk slowly round it, chaunting — amongst so many gods — that there is no god but Allah. And, as he finished, Horns passed over in the incarnation of a kite, and lit on one of the pillars from which he had probably been disturbed by the muezzin and made a brief remark that I could not understand, but it sounded entirely contented

CHAPTER XVIII

THE COUNTRY BEYOND MOON'S RISING

I CAME BACK FROM LUXOR WITH THE CRANES, GOING NORTHWARD IN THE spring; soaring and circling and leisurely they went, and, though they could have kept pace with our train, they saw no need to do so and we soon passed them. I imagine that if one does write the story of one's tellurian journey (as Francis Thompson would have called it) one should write something of common things seen by the way, so that other travellers may identify one's journey; and that one should brighten, or at least vary, one's tale with a few unusual things such as one's fellow-travellers may not have seen for themselves. Every sportsman that owns a gun will be familiar with searching for various kinds of birds in different cover, and an intricate search that may be, even in grass, so that the thing is almost an art in itself; but I wonder if anyone has searched, as I searched now, in a field of clover for a motor-tyre. On my way out from Cairo to Mena House Hotel a tyre left a wheel of the taxi and ran on down the road before us, till it slanted a bit to its right and came to the steep bank that raises the road and went down it, gaining momentum, and away through a clover field until it fell; and the taxi-driver, not having marked it carefully, had a long search for it in the clover that was luxuriant in the middle of March. Outside Mena House Hotel as I sat in a chair I noticed two detectives standing, and realized, what I afterwards heard to have been the case, that Lord Allenby must be in the neighbourhood, which I suppose is what the detectives were there to conceal, because the country was a little disturbed at that time. In fact some people had said to me: "Are you really going to the Sudan just now, with all these disturbances?"

To whom I had replied: "Do you realize that where I am going is as far from Cairo as Poland is?"

I had never yet met Lord Allenby, and most unfortunately he had been told that I was staying at some other hotel, and had kindly invited me to lunch or dinner, but I never received the invitation. I don't suppose that the detectives gave themselves away like that every day, and shouldn't like to suggest that they did; but, coming from the South, I had a hat with a rather wider brim than what most people had in Cairo, and I think it was that that

excited them. Afterwards my wife and I got to know Lord and Lady Allenby very well, and it is a privilege to have known so great a man. A lady had once written to me telling me that a poem I wrote at the time of the armistice, and which appeared in *The Times* on Armistice Day, was Lord Allenby's favourite poem. Something has taught me, I don't know what, to discount and even discredit all praise: this method of preventing one's head being turned is, after all, rather like clamping one's weathercock so that it shall not turn too lightly to wandering breezes. But, however that may be, I merely disbelieved the lady. Then I heard it again, and again I disbelieved it; but I said to my wife then, "If I hear it a third time, I shall believe it." And the third time I heard it from Lord Allenby.

I came back with my heads and skins on the *Mooltan,* and with some less obvious trophies, trophies that are indeed invisible till the printer's aid has been secured, and invisible even then to such as may keep their eyes shut. The trophies to which I refer are rather territories than trophies, the territories by which travel extends the boundaries of the imagination. In writing of those travels, as I do now, I follow a suggestion that was offered to me; but a little reluctantly, because I have always held that the experience of a lifetime should be treated like the raw gold that goldsmiths must keep at the back of their shops, nuggets not for sale, but only to be used for the work of the goldsmith's craft, the material that is to receive the impression of their fancies. It was from material gathered on this journey that on 29th and 30th March, 1925, I wrote a tale called *The Tale Of The Abu Laheeb.* There was in this tale more description of the upper reaches of the White Nile or of the Bahr-el-Gazai than I have given here; indeed the whole setting of that fantastic story may be regarded as accurately true to life, though not the tale itself. I mention this short story and its date, because it was the first time that I told of the wanderings of a character that I called Jorkens. He was my reply to some earlier suggestion that I should write of my journeys after big game and, being still reluctant to do this, I had invented a drunken old man who, whenever he could cadge a drink at a club, told tales of his travels. When in addition to his other failings I made him a liar, I felt that at least there could be nothing boastful about my stories. And yet their background is all true; the cactus forests of Kenya are there, the Laikipia plains, the papyrus swamps of the Nile, the Sahara and some of its mountains, and Egypt, Aden, the Ganges and the Himalayas: the lie is the tale itself, worked up with this material as a goldsmith will make a

winged goddess from honest gold. It is unfortunate that I named him Jorkens, which is practically the same name as a character in Dickens, as I had overlooked at the time. I should like to change his name by deed poll if I knew what authority had charge of the patronymics of fiction; perhaps the Authors' Society. On 3rd April I wrote another story of this nature, getting the material this time from North Africa. It was some years before I wrote many more of these tales, but they have by now made three books and I have another more than half written. Those already published I called *The Travel Tales of Mr. Joseph Jorkens,* and *Jorkens Remembers Africa,* and *Jorkens Has a Large Whiskey.* I used one method in all these tales, which was to choose an event which was as impossible as I was able to imagine, and then to expend all my ingenuity in making it plausible and, if I could, credible. Anybody, I rather felt, could make a reader believe that he saw a rabbit; but it required some little skill, and was worth working for, to make him believe that Jorkens married a mermaid in Aden. In a delightful letter that Kipling wrote to me about the first of these books he said: "*For sheer cheek the mermaid yarn is the best. I am not thinking for the minute of anything but the audacity of it.*"

And my wife reminds me of one tale in which I succeeded too well: this was a story of a journey by aeroplane to the planet Mars, not undertaken by Jorkens himself, but by a friend; and one day I received a letter from America, saying, "*It is obvious from the sincerity with which you write that you believe that it can be done. If you tell me this really is so I will devote my life to getting there.*" And I have no doubt he would have. But millions of Americans just now are concentrating on getting to Berlin. Very likely he is among them. I did not know how to answer the letter. It reached me in India when I was rather preoccupied with tigers, and the weather was hot, and I never found leisure and energy to answer it, as I should have done. But what would I have said if I had?

I wrote no more tales that year about Jorkens, for on 8th May I started a novel called *The Charwoman's Shadow*, and it occupied me off and on until 29th October. It was practically a continuation of my *Chronicles of Rodriguez,* telling of the Golden Age in Spain down to the last day of it, for the book ends with the words "and the Golden Age was over." The exact date of the Golden Age is not given, for a reason that is stated in the preface to *The Chronicles of Rodriguez,* which is that "magic even in small

quantities appears to affect time, much as acids affect some metals." And magic is to be found in both of these books.

I learned when writing this book that, although an idea for a story seems never to be forgotten, at any rate in my memory, where such ideas have sometimes lain for years before I have got to work on them, yet a phrase is as illusive as a butterfly, and should always be jotted down if worth remembering. One such phrase came to me one evening as I was playing chess with the blacksmith in his garden in Shoreham and the full moon came up huge over a hill called White Hill, and I did jot the phrase down, but mislaid it and could not find it when I needed it for this book. The idea that haunted it I remembered, but not the actual phrase. The huge moon coming over the hill in the summer evening filled all the air with mystery, which deepened over the hill in the land that one could not see, and the phrase that came to me out of that mystery was "the country beyond Moon's Rising." This was the very thing that I wanted towards the end of that book, and when I could not find the exact words I tried to remember them and could do no better than "the country towards Moon's Rising," which after all is only a roundabout way of saying further east. But it should have been "the country beyond Moon's Rising," and when I discovered the bit of paper on which I had jotted it down the book was already in print and I fear no-one will remember to alter it in later editions. For that book ends with the tale of a magician, who had been rather the villain than the hero of the book, though he was a man of some personality; and as the book ends he goes away through a pass of the Pyrenees, in search of a land to which magicians went, escaping the damnation that is their due, and the children of Pan and all magical things go with him. "And before the human destiny overtook him he saw one morning, clear where the dawn had been, the luminous rock of the bastions and glittering rampart that rose up sheer from the frontier of the Country Beyond Moon's Rising.... Upon those battlements and by the opening gates were gathered the robed Masters that had trafficked with time and dwelt awhile on Earth, and handed the mysteries on, and had walked round the back of the grave by the way that they knew, and were even beyond damnation. They raised their hands and blessed him.

"And now for him, and the creatures that followed after, the gates were wide that led through the earthward rampart of the Country Beyond Moon's

Rising. He limped towards it with all his magical following. He went therein, and the Golden Age was over.”

CHAPTER XIX

IN HAPPY ISLES

I DID NOT LIVE THE LIFE OF A RECLUSE WHILE I WROTE THE BOOK OF WHICH

I tell in the last chapter, for besides two visits during the summer we went to a good many shooting parties, mostly to shoot partridges, but at some I shot grouse, and we went to Arden again. When I say that I did not lead the life of a recluse, I mean that I did not lead it all the time, but while I was actually putting pen to paper I liked to be as far as possible from sounds that would remind me that I was not in the world of my imagination, but in another. There was a ruined farmhouse at Arden on one of the lovely hills on which they used to let me stalk rabbits, and the house still had something of a roof and even the remains of a fireplace. Here I was allowed to go with a canvas chair and a kettle and teapot, and I wrote a good deal of the story there in perfect quiet, or rather among sounds such as wind and the bleating of sheep, which were common to either country. We went that year for some stalking to Kildalton Castle, the lovely place of Mr. Talbot Clifton in Islay. The story of the strange personality of this great traveller and sportsman has already been told by his wife. To stand on a tower of that house at sunset and to see the level rays touching all the hills and the far mountains of Jura is to see something lovelier than what even the Sahara can show when dawn or sunset are upon its mountains. It was a paradise of sport, in which there was almost every kind of shooting. In fact, leave out the word *may,* which so often occurs in it, and a poem that I wrote later to my friend Harry Clifton after he had succeeded his father, fairly describes at least some of the sport to be had there. Here is the poem:

To A Friend In The Hebrides

May your stags roar like thunder;
May every autumn day
Be in your woods a wonder;

May widgeon crowd the bay;
May geese in northern places
Soon southwards turn their faces
Running aërial races
With wild winds over spray.

And, when the winds blow harder
And duck move in from shores,
May all things fill your larder;
May snipe be there in scores
And teal and golden plover,
With birds of moor and covert;
May troubles flight far over
And peace be at your doors.

And there were always merry parties whenever I saw Kildalton. The serious business was of course stalking, as is, I think, the case in all Highland houses. There was a small forest near the house, and a big one further away going up to the bens that look down on Jura. Once on the Bahr-el-Gazai I came to country where the animals were unfamiliar with white men and seemed to think they were safe if they kept out of the extreme range of a spear, but the Highland stag knows all about stalking and there is no animal harder to shoot. How difficult he is to approach may not be easily realized, because one never goes after him without an expert, and does not fire until he has been outwitted for one by a Highland stalker. One of the stalkers with whom I used to go out at Kildalton had both stalked and been stalked, of which he told me one day while he was gralloching a stag with a knife that he wore on an Austrian belt that he got from a sniper. Stalking is of course an all-day job; one starts immediately after breakfast with one's lunch in one's pocket, and a flask of whiskey for celebrations, and one drinks at the burns, and sometimes travels by them, for they give good cover, and one is out all day. Those burns, that run in at one's collar and out along one's stockings, if one is using them for a stalk, go from the bens of Islay towards the sea and are all turned into whiskey, for there are great distilleries along the coast. Guests at Kildalton are sometimes shown over the principal distillery, through sheds a hundred yards long, and samples are of course shown them in every shed, so that it

is said in Kildalton that no-one ever came back sober from one of these walks. Two or three young men were once shown over this distillery while I was out stalking there, and they came back perfectly sober; and then at dinner I made some joke, not good enough for me even to remember it, and they laughed, and laughing seemed to stimulate the flow of blood to the head and whatever else may have been in their blood, and for the rest of the evening they were quite changed.

In the big forest towards Jura one used to go alone with the stalker, but, when one went to the smaller one near the house, one of the girls in the party sometimes came with one. I don't remember which year it was, but I well remember a girl coming with me one year, and I got a stag early and stayed to help the stalker while she went home to lunch, which she naturally preferred to watching the last obsequies of a stag. As she approached the house Mrs. Clifton saw her coming and took one look at her face and, as she told me afterwards, thought that we must have had a quarrel. It was not usual for a stag to be got so early, though by no means impossible, but it was her look at the girl's face that made her sure that something must have been wrong. The girl had never been out stalking before, and consequently I had smeared her face with a bleeding piece of stag, which the stalker had handed me for that purpose. Mrs. Clifton had expected me to get a stag, but the girl had done something that no girl had ever done at Kildalton before, and had washed her face in a burn, after being blooded, before getting back to the house. To Mrs. Clifton, watching for a triumphant return, this had not appeared to be possible, and she never even thought of it; so, seeing no blood on the girl's face, she thought a stag could not have been killed, and yet she had come home to lunch! What dreadful thing had happened?

The girl tried to explain, but I don't think she was ever quite understood.

There was always a toast drunk at dinner there whenever a stag had been killed. The dining-room windows, sometimes still uncurtained at dinner, when the long summer evenings, so far North, lingered far into September, gave one a view of the kind of thing that the world is losing so fast, green lawns that a few flower-beds brightened, a wood at the edge of the lawns whose trees had been there for ever, a glade in the wood running down to the rocks at the edge of the bay, far isles looming dimly across the sea, and fallow-deer, wild as the wood, beginning to steal out into the glade and coming on to the lawns as the day grew stiller.

And I remember the stately swans riding the bay, and their feathers lying all along the shore. I wrote the following poem at this lovely place.

The Happy Isles

A rumour to the Romans came,
Got partly from a poet's lips
And part from sunset clouds aflame,
Seen dimly from the furthest ships.

It told how, westward of our hopes
And further far than any dream,
With dawn for ever on their slopes,
The Happy Isles are all agleam.

I think that some seafarer hurled
Beyond the Gates of Hercules,
Lost by the boundaries of the world
And tost upon the last of seas,
Saw Islay suddenly through haze,
By some wild shaft of sunshine lit,
Its heather gleaming in the rays,
And Jura gazing down on it.

When we left Islay we had our motor to meet the ship and drove south along the Cheviots and through the lake country of Westmorland and stayed with Mr and Mrs. Riddell-Blount at Cheeseburn Grange, which is just inside that empire that Mussolini lately wished to re-establish, for the old Roman wall runs just to the North of it, its line across England still plainly visible even where it has fallen level with the fields; and I had a day's good shooting there.

In spite of more shooting visits I went on with my book as occasion offered and, back again at Dunsany, I finished it on 29th October, and scarcely wrote any more till next June. About this year or next there was published an anthology of English prose. I wonder if it will be any

consolation to any young workers at any art to hear that nothing of mine was included in this anthology. I would refer them to my *King of Elfland's Daughter* which had been published in the late spring of 1924. If they know they have done good work and have no recognition, it may console them to know they are not the only ones. But the real consolation is that it is the work that matters, and that in the end it can assuredly look after itself. I got about five hundred and seventy snipe in the winter in which I finished *The Charwoman's Shadow,* and was able to get a sufficient number of other birds to prevent our dinner from being monotonous; and I did a certain amount of fox-hunting, and no writing.

In April, 1926, we went to Gadogan Square, and that spring the General Strike broke out. No doubt someone is making plans to prevent such a thing occurring again, and, whoever he is, he would probably deride some poor fellow explaining a plan of his own to stop the high tides, but these things are tests that are bound to occur. A class might have grown up in England that knew nothing of the way in which the country was really run, and whose members were incapable of doing the work on which the life of the country depended. No-one could know for certain: it was worth while testing it to find out. So the General Strike came. And again, there may have been one piece of work, only one, on which the community's way of life depended, such as driving railway engines, which all except engine-drivers, although still healthy and active, were unable to do. As our whole system gets more and more dangerously complex, and as more and more men specialize in one particular kind of intricate work, the risk of such a thing happening increases yearly. Obviously if such a thing did happen, the men of the particular trade to which this applied could dictate to the rest, and we should have to say Heil Telephone Clerk instead of merely giving a number, or Heil Engineer. Had that time come? Were those who did not tend railway engines, or equally useful things, become like the drones of metaphor; not like the drones of fact, for they are hard-working creatures, but like those actual drones at the end of June after their wings have been paralysed? That was what the General Strike was to find out. And it came. Men like the late Lord Montagu might have been expected by some to say: "Damn those engine-drivers, why don't they get on with their work?" But he made no such comment; he merely did their work for them and drove the Plymouth express. I saw him at the Beefsteak Club with grime in cracks of his nails, that had got in deeper than soap could go. And undergraduates from the

universities poured into London, to share amongst them the jobs on which the life of a city depends. A story went round at that time of a lorry-load of them driving through the East End and a woman coming out and shouting at them, "You bloody bastards"; upon which one of them gave the perfect answer, "Hullo, mother! Are *you* here?" And when these men were doing the work, and when their tempers couldn't be ruffled, there did not seem much more for the Strike to do. We all had jobs in those days. It was a queer time, as it always must be when a city changes its mood. There is something so hugely important about a capital city that, if it does make any change, it seems as strange as though the Sahara should run with rivers. Well, one does see a lot of water in the Sahara, but it is illusory. And perhaps the air of almost eternal permanence that a great city always wears is illusory too. I remember one night being driven by a special constable in a car from the City of London to Cadogan Square, and he had forgotten to put his lights on, and nobody stopped us the whole way, until one special constable did, only a few hundred yards before the end of our journey. I hope a great many years will pass before that can be done again. There appeared no malice upon either side: it was only a test.

Then I began to write again. On 7th and 8th June I wrote a one-act play, and another on 16th and 17th June, and on 30th June, 2nd July, and 5th July I wrote three more, the best of them, as it seemed to me, being *The Raffle*, which I wrote on 5th July. All these plays, with two others, were published by Messrs. Putnam in 1928, in a book that I called *Seven Modern Comedies*. That summer we stayed, as we did in many summers, at Mapledurham, Mr and Mrs. Riddell-Blount's beautiful place on the Thames. Both the house and the garden are among those things that modern progress so hastily overturns and then so sentimentally regrets, though luckily no such progress has yet been accomplished there.

On 19th August I started again on that very laborious undertaking, writing a novel. An idea had suddenly come to me; and, when I sat down to write, it easily worked itself out. That is to say the story unrolled itself without any difficulty, but the labour of writing seventy thousand words is not easy, and that is the length that a novel has to be. It may be longer, but God forbid that I should take longer than that to tell a story. This book was called *The Blessing of Pan*, and told how the whole of an English village came gradually under Pan's influence, while a clergyman fought the influence alone, unaided by Authority; because Authority preferred to take

the line of refusing to recognize that such a dreadful state of things could be. So in the end Pan wins. A queer old character walked right into this book, as I was writing it, as though of his own accord, and was I think the best character in it. Looking again at the few scraps of records by which I can sometimes mark the passing of time, I see that it was rather this book than *The Charwoman's Shadow* that I wrote for some days in the ruined farmhouse at Arden; for we went again there this year and shot grouse and worked at the book. And I went again to Kildalton and shot four stags there as well as a good many grouse. This was the last time that I ever saw Talbot Clifton. Next year he went on one more of his great journeys, and on the way back from Africa died in the Canary Islands.

CHAPTER XX

IN ENGLISH WOODS

I TRIED TO WRITE ONE DAY AT KILDALTON, BUT THERE WAS NO RUINED farmhouse there in which I could renounce a cheery party, so I enjoyed myself instead, as I did also at Helperby to which I went next, though I got on with my book in the train.

At Dunsany I occupied my time with my book and fox-hunting and shooting, and got over 600 snipe that year. Naturally I gave a good many away, and I sent four woodcock to Lady Celia Coates at Helperby and she kindly wrote to thank me, even though she had received nothing of my present except the label. So I sent up to our local doctor and got from him as many poison labels as he could spare, I think two dozen. Some were written in scarlet letters on white and others in white on scarlet. I then packed up four more woodcock and gummed the two dozen labels all over the parcel and wrote on it Four Poisoned Rats. And this time they arrived quite safely. This year was also a good one for that great trophy the goose, as I always feel it to be when I am in Ireland. If shooting a lion or a rhinoceros could make one contemptuous of geese or even snipe, I should have greatly lost, instead of gained, by my journeys after big game; but luckily, though I do not bother about birds when there are lions about, or anything that one shoots with a large rifle, I did not find that the sport that had brightened so many years for me had lost its old interest. I got four barnacle geese this year, and six gray lags; and many a man shoots larger animals with less difficulty. Indeed to shoot a goose is a feat of the intellect, and no man should attempt it who is not quite sure that he has more intelligence than a grey lag.

As I look at an old hunting-diary again I reflect on how much foxhunting does to build up a man’s imagination, or at any rate the picture of the world that he carries about with him. It is hard to picture what one has not seen, and all have seen something of the world, but the fox-hunter quickly changes his horizon and sees many another scene, and sees one scene leading on into another, so that the world becomes a larger place to him, and even a more familiar place, than it does to those whom the excitement of the chase does not urge to these travels. The airman and the mountaineer

have such visions too, but somehow not the passenger in a train, for then one cannot feel that one is part of the country, as the sportsman does, and rightly; for, though some call his avocation barbarous, none can say it is not ancient, or that it is not a favourite amusement of that barbarous old lady Mother Earth, or Dame Nature if you like; for there is not a pin to choose between them, and they have been at this game for ages.

Meanwhile from the neighbouring shore of the world of dreams I was still digging my *Blessing of Pan,* but slowly, for I had only worked four days in October, four in November, two in December and none at all in January. But as the shooting season ended, and a month later the hunting season, I worked harder and the book was finished in Kent, whence the idea had come, on 12th May, 1927. And barring an article on some alarming signs of decay in our language, which I wrote for the English Association on 18th and 19th May, and a short story on 20th and 21 st June, and a longish one-act play that I wrote on 19th August, I wrote no more that year. The play was called *Atalanta in Wimbledon* and was, I think, the best of my collection of seven that was published the next year. Indeed, but for three more days' work, I wrote nothing more until a bit of travel, which even in times of peace is a good stimulant on which to write poetry, opened up a new vein for me that began on 10th May, 1928. When "laced" with war, as some people strengthen port with brandy, that stimulant can be quite double as strong.

In the spring of 1927 we went, as we usually did, to Kent. I had the tent with which I used to travel in Africa put up every summer there at the edge of our wood and in the hot weather I often spent a night in it, and sometimes even in April; indeed April was the best time for it, for the chorus of the blackbirds just before dawn is one of the most wonderful symphonies one can hear. In our house we hear it too, for there are old yew-trees there within a few feet of the windows, and the blackbirds always sing from them. But in the wood they were all round one, and few things have impressed me more, even when travelling in the wildest countries, than that single wild clear note heard in the wood while it is still dark, remarkable among all the other noises of the night, which is the note of the first blackbird. It may even wake one from sleep, and opening one's eyes in the dark one wonders for a moment what this clear call can be, and then the chorus of all the rest arises, and one knows that the blackbirds on the high

branches have seen the light of the dawn that has not yet come over the hill to the rest of the wood.

I once read in a paper a musical notation of the blackbird's song that had been written down so that it could be played on a piano. This bit of music seemed to me to have a wonder about it as strange as there could be about anything brought home by a traveller from the very farthest journey; for there is between us and the blackbirds, and all the creatures of the woods, a wider gap than there is between us and the remotest peoples of Asia; and to hear the blackbirds' language coming from our pianos almost seemed like traffic with magic. Our house in Kent is near London, and yet it lies in a bit of England that the ages have not much altered, and I used to find that my sleep was disturbed in my tent by foxes and badgers, at least one of which would come quite close every night, walking rather noisily over the dry leaves. So I used to take a dog up to the tent with me and, whatever dog I took, he never failed to realize that he was on guard and, when fox or badger came near, I only had to say "Hunt him," and the dog would hunt it at once. The one that took most readily to this was an old English sheep-dog, but all his successors understood the job. Some preferred lying on my bed to watching from a strip of carpet; one even used surreptitiously to push me a little out of his way; but all of them understood the duty of chasing anything that made a noise near my tent. Of course such noises do not wake one when one is travelling in Africa, for there one has done more hard work during the day than one does in the lazier and more luxurious surroundings of home. And I may mention a thing that I discovered in that wood, with which scientists will be familiar enough, but which most people may not have noticed, and that is that whenever aeroplanes came over at night I used to hear a sound among the dead leaves as though voles or field-mice were running: the aeroplane was too high to make a draught in the leaves, nor did it seem to be any echo of the noise of the engines striking the ground, but must, I think, have come from the weight of the aeroplane pressing upon the column of air that supported it, and so disturbing the leaves at the other end. Talking of dogs, and I have scarcely ever lived in a house without a dog in it, a bulldog with a considerable sense of humour that I used to have there, once invented a game: he would stand with a tennis-ball just in front of him, and then would look at me with an expression in his eye that obviously meant the ball was for me. When I tried to take it he would pick it up and walk away with it over the lawn and go a little faster than I did when I

followed him. It may not have been a very profound game, but getting a ball from somebody else, at football or cricket, is quite an important part of our own civilization. This dog, when that time arrived which to all dogs is so lamentable, the time of the packing of boxes, used to sit on the flannel coat that had been made for him to keep him warm when travelling and which he wore at no other time; so long as he was with that coat he felt he was safe and would never be left behind. Do we not cling, on such occasions, with the same faith to our tickets?

On 29th June of this year there was a total eclipse of the sun, visible in the North of England. I motored to Yorkshire to see it and, although where I went there was a cloud over the eclipse during the period of totality, it was nevertheless a memorable sight and we had such a view of earth and sky as people rarely see more than once in a lifetime. Never shall I forget the enormous golden sickle of the sun as it came out of the eclipse. Obviously the size of it as seen by our eyes can have been no greater than the size of a crescent of the moon, but its fierce light seemed to magnify it, so that it appeared the hugest crescent one had ever seen in the sky. As the eclipse came on I remember a hawthorn tree on the hill beside us, which seemed to gather its shadows all round it, till it stood there draped with them, far more like a picture by Sime in black-and-white than anything that one actually sees on the earth. And then as the sun disappeared the sky turned Prussian blue, a rather unlovely colour utterly unlike any tint I had seen it wear before, either by night or day. There was a deep hush and, when the eclipse passed away, motor lamps were still shining, as though the owners of cars, like everyone else, had forgotten everything but this tremendous phenomenon.

Painting had always attracted me, but somehow I had been deterred by the idea that one could not do it, also people had spoken mysteriously to me about oils and how one had to use turpentine with them and they had rather spoken with an air that implied that there was some difficulty about getting and using turpentine. But now, in spite of these inhibitions, I decided to paint. I had tried it once before, about 1920, when I had determined to teach myself, working a certain number of hours every day with water-colours; and I might perhaps have done so, only that an idea for a novel came along and I worked at that instead. I had found water-colours extremely difficult, and I now decided to try oils. So I took what seems to me to be the most important step that one can take if one wishes to paint: I went into a shop

and bought an outfit. Knowing nothing about it I bought an extremely bad outfit, but from then on I began to paint and, with the exception of ten lessons which I had later, I taught myself as I went along. I need hardly say that in the ten hours or so during which I had tuition I was taught things that it might have taken me that number of years to find out for myself. I do not think I had any aptitude for painting, because I found it very difficult, and I only got there by hard work. One day I was painting a pelargonium a year or two later and, whether the picture was good or bad, or like a pelargonium, I suddenly saw that it had a certain style or look by which I could recognize that it was like one of my pictures. Hitherto I had made pictures without any style at all, or without any that I could recognize, and I painted like a man writing without any identifiable caligraphy. From then on my pictures had a certain style of their own. This style did not at all follow any preferences that I knew I had, and came by no deliberate choice, and before I had had any lessons. I soon selected trees to paint: they are full of interest and character, and I think I had the feeling that I could paint a tree and perhaps get a branch a yard out of place and it would not be much criticized, whereas portraits of our younger neighbours, the human race, would defeat me, because if I got a nose an inch out of place the picture would be absurd, and I could not count on my skill for sufficient accuracy to avoid the risk of that. Then when the weather grew too cold to draw trees I painted hothouse flowers, for I found that, though while sitting for duck on a wintry night one keeps unaccountably warm, crouching and clutching one's gun, yet when I painted in cold weather I not only got cold, but the work so much absorbed me that I did not notice it, and so got colder and colder. Finally I did turn to painting portraits and, whether the pictures were fair or bad, to my great surprise I always got likenesses, and I have now painted portraits of a great many of my friends.

I know few things, if any, more pleasant than the English house-party. I will not prove this assertion, for one does not go to these parties with a note-book and jot down the talk one hears there; though sometimes one remark sticks in one's memory, as one, and indeed two, that I heard at Terling that year where we went to shoot pheasants with Lord Rayleigh: I was talking to a young man about black crows, who was more familiar with them than I was, because in Ireland we get only the grey crow, and I asked him how, when he was shooting one of these plunderers, he avoided killing

a rook by mistake, and he had said that he shot rooks too. I asked him why. And he said: “Because they are doing no good *at this time of year*.”

The remark struck home very deep, because I wondered how one would manage to survive if one had to be shot oneself at any time of the year that one was doing no good. And when I repeated this remark, in the presence of the unfortunate young man, to another guest his comment was: “I would rather have said that than have taken Quebec.”

These two remarks I have remembered vividly for twenty-five years. And I will mention a game that we always played at another house-party to which we also went that year. This was at Helperby, and I know the game may not seem a bit more intelligent than the game that the bulldog invented, but like an apparently simple puzzle it contains a surprise. The game is that, one person having gone out of the room, the rest think of a public or private character and on the return of the person who has gone out they tell him whether it is a man or a woman; he then goes round asking such questions as, What food does he remind you of? What style of architecture? What flower? What country? What period of history? And the surprising thing is that the answer is sometimes got in four or five questions, and nearly always in under twenty. For instance one is given a man and asks, What kind of vegetable is he like? Answer, a melon. What kind of an animal? Answer, a nightjar. What piece of furniture? A heavily ornamented commode. What period of history? Answer, the Dark Ages. And one is already well on the way to Field-Marshal Goering.

CHAPTER XXI

AMERICA'S HOSPITALITY

MY SON CAME OF AGE THIS YEAR, AND AT THE END OF THE WINTER HE went to India to join the Guides Cavalry, after being attached for a year to a battalion of the Rifle Brigade. For some while he so missed foxhunting that on 1st November of his first year in India he and another young officer who felt the same way solemnly went outside the mess at eleven a in and sent for two glasses of port, which a kitmagar brought them, without knowing what solemn western ritual they celebrated, while they drank to fox-hunting and tried to imagine a lawn-meet around them on the dried mud. But pig-sticking soon entirely took the place of fox-hunting in his life. And turning back pages of our house-book, which even Fate cannot do with the years, I see, among faces that grow younger and younger as I turn, photographs of cheerful house-parties that we used to have in those days. And on a bit of paper gummed into the same house-book I see a rhyme that I wrote for one of my son's friends, or rather I should say one of our friends, discovered for us by our son, who often visited us from the neighbouring county of Kildare. She asked me, one day, to write an epitaph for her and, though the subject was a mournful one, I did not like to refuse to do what she had asked. She was an enthusiastic motorist, like most of her contemporaries, and was, as I thought, too enthusiastic whenever she saw another car in front of her. This was the epitaph:

Here lies Toby Of the family of Kennedy,
Who wanted to go by Any car any day.
The carburettor hit her
And there isn't any remedy.

A little later I was requested by one of our nieces, Lady Joan Colville, then unmarried, to write a poem upon a more cheerful subject, her eyelashes. As they rather lent themselves to poetry and, as unlike all the Pakenhams, she had never yet had a poem from me, I was glad to compose the following:

There was a young lady whose lashes
Outshone Wimbledon, Lords and The Ashes
In publicity value,
And she lately said Shall you
Write rhyme to their shadows and flashes?

During the winter I continued my usual pursuit of woodcock and snipe and different kinds of ducks, sometimes alone and sometimes with my son and with one or two of his friends, until he went to India; or sometimes I attended shooting parties of my neighbours and, when hounds met near, had some fox-hunting. And at the end of the shooting-season, when I had nothing particular on hand to keep me, I received an invitation from the University of Pennsylvania to go there and give a lecture on the drama. My view about returning to America to receive again the wonderful kindness that had been shown me there before was that, if anybody deserved such kindness on account of his work, he ought to get on with his work. In other words, much as I had often resented lack of recognition, I realized when it came that no worker ought to spend much time, if any, standing back from his work in order to be praised for it. So I had decided not to return to America in order to talk about my work and in order to receive the abundant hospitality for which the United States are famous. But I felt that a definite offer to give a lecture to an University was something different from a mere lecture tour, and I accepted. I had been asked at the same time to take a class for an hour on five days, in which undergraduates studied the drama, as I think I have mentioned earlier is done in every American university. So much is the art of the drama confused in England with the art of the theatre that I perhaps ought to explain that I did not lecture on the art of acting, of which I know nothing, but on the dramatic art.

I had a most interesting talk in the boat-train with a man of I will not say what nationality, who had just had to take to politics because he wanted a road up to his factory. He was travelling with one of those young men who write the world's greatest dance-tunes, but when this young man was called he had rolled over and gone to sleep again: again they woke him, telling him that he would only just be in time for the train and that he had made a reservation on the *Olympic;* but he had replied, "I guess I'll book another." And so he was not in the train with us. I heard how he employed a lawyer who used to travel about Europe where dance-bands blared these tunes, and

whenever he heard a band doing it he took a little money from them. And whenever the young man who wrote the world's greatest dance-tunes wanted some money, he wrote to the lawyer and the lawyer sent him some. I was given a curious sketch of this man: "I don't say he's straight. He's got so many friends that one might rather suspect him. But he's a smart lawyer."

On board the *Olympic* I saw what not many people see, that is to say the ocean. Not many people see it, because all the passengers sat, as they nearly always do, on the sunny side of the ship; and with the sun in your eyes and the long glare of its reflection across the water one can see very little. Sometimes I used to go to the other side and look over at the extraordinary beauty of the waves, big masses of sapphire rising up and then bursting, and falling like an avalanche upon cliffs of turquoise. And looking now at old letters I find plenty of examples of the variety of the sea. For I wrote in a letter to my wife that an American had told me there was a mean-looking sea, and I had gone out to look at it, "*and saw shafts of sunlight ahead, falling upon a patch of the grey and ugly sea. It came nearer and one saw the waves all merry*, *making a small picture that could have been painted in blue and grey and gold. Then we sailed into it, and our waves seemed to welcome it; the spray flashed, and a small rainbow came and danced beside us. On the deck lay a powdering of hail. In two minutes this patch of summer was far astern of us.*"

And next day I wrote: "*Last night we came into a storm and have been going through a raging gale all day. The view was mostly spray, racing away out of sight, and a brownish circle around us that may have been snow or anything.*" And the day after that I wrote, "*the sea is blue and white and fit to look at, and shining in the sun;*" but my letter ended thus: "*We didn't get much sunlight, rain and such stuff soon came up from the South-East. I've just been watching the waves falling back from the ship, ink breaking into brilliant turquoise-blue.*

"Tuesday. *We are mourning through a fog. A while mist with the sunlight only just out of sight and our mournful voice ripping through it. This afternoon I suppose I shall find out whether they have forgotten me like O. Henry, or whether they remember me.*

"4.50 *p m.*

"*We are coming into New York, or somewhere. A little British ship has just come by, shouting* '*There is a steamer right ahead of you.*' *Such information must be worth having. And then I read the word* LITHUANIA *in the fog. Quite as close passed the* E. W. SINCLAIR *a little later.*

1 Sutton Place.

"Midnight.

Interviewers much the same as ever, photographers worse."

After a kind welcome from the American Press I passed with my luggage under the eye of Customs officers, kindly helped by a friend of my publisher, Major George Haven Putnam, who had sent him there to look after me. Thanks to his help I had not much difficulty in soon getting by, but in any case I think that the Customs officers of New York give little trouble to a British traveller, because they know that evasion of the customs is a thing to which years of study have to be given, and that only an American citizen could attempt to compete with any chance of success. That success may be won, the following story will show. Of course in 1928 the interest of all serious smugglers was concerned solely with wine and spirits. A traveller arrived at the docks with a hamper amongst his luggage. To the Customs officer he said: "Please don't open that, as I have a very valuable cat inside, and it might escape."

"We know all about that cat," said the officer. "Open it."

So the traveller opened the hamper. Out leaped a cat and rushed away down the platform. The traveller ran after it with the empty hamper, and a long while after returned.

"I asked you not to open it," he said.

"I know that," said the officer; "but we have to deal with all sorts of people: I had to open it. But I am sorry. Got your cat all right?"

"Yes, I got her at last," said the traveller. And no more was said. The cat was the ship's cat. And when it got out it ran straight to the ship, and the man with the hamper after it. But when he got to the ship he didn't put the cat into the hamper: he filled that hamper with bottles of whiskey.

I wrote to my wife next day: "*It's the same old rush. Very stimulating, and ideas pour out of one, but I fear they may have evaporated by the time I lecture. Mrs. Putnam is perfectly charming. Interviews took place there* (1 *Sutton Place) this morning, and photography with explosives*."

I wrote from the Century Club, one of the most delightful clubs, to which Major Putnam not only took me as his guest, but of which he had me made

an honorary member during my stay in New York. Among the many very interesting men in that club one could meet at that time, what now can be met nowhere in the world, one or two old soldiers that fought in the American Civil War. Major Putnam himself was one of these old heroes, and I had the interesting experience, which no man can ever have now, of standing in front of a very large photograph of the field of Gettysburg that hung on a wall of his house, while he explained to me the whole course of the battle, and what it was fought for, which was boots.' Until I left New York Major and Mrs. Putnam entertained me in their pleasant house. As the planet Mars is reputed to be ahead of America, so the Americans have in their civilization things that are ahead of what we have got. For instance, however much we may enjoy sitting in a semi-circle of chairs before a good fire, an atmosphere of early summer distributed equally through a house the whole year round was something that in the year 1928 was entirely new to me; so much so that looking out of the window from this atmosphere into a clear and intensely blue sky it was at first a considerable surprise to me to walk out into a temperature that was somewhere near zero. I met Mr. Pond again and very cautiously undertook to do a few lectures in addition to the one for which I had come, but explaining to him that Boston and Philadelphia were to be very near my boundaries. So kind he was and took such care of me that, referring to the story that I have mentioned on page 16, I wrote to my wife: "*I owe it to him to pour water copiously on my head, to give veracity to his story.*"

And I found the Roulands again and saw some splendid pictures that he had painted of palaces and precipices and gods that I had invented. And I noted in the letter which I have already quoted: "*They are pulling down New York. One no longer sees along Fifth Avenue a chalet from Switzerland and a castle from Normandy, side by side with a pyramid from Egypt, but great American structures going up, as they should, expressing America and the age.*" Next day what I describe as "a rival Barnum" rang me up and tried to book me for lectures the next year. But I refused, for the reason which I have already indicated in this book, that going round lecturing, and receiving much hospitality, is not a writer's job.

At a dinner that Major and Mrs. Putnam gave in their house I saw Mrs. Douglas Robinson again. A man told an amusing story at that dinner about getting a drink "in spite of the eighteenth amendment." When it was finished his wife said in a loud voice, "That is a most disgusting story."

I was so sorry for the man that I told a worse one, and he was so encouraged by the diversion of his wife's scorn that he told another, and was then little better off than he had been before. As stories were being told I told one of James Stephens who had been at a reception that was being given to me in that lovely place, Leighton House, and a lady had said to him apologetically that not so much notice as was his due was being taken of him, and he had replied, indicating me, "He is so much larger than I; he *needs* more recognition."

Where reason ends and before madness begins there is brilliant space illuminated by humour, and it is just in those bright fields that such a suggestion may be heard, that a man with a large frame needs more praise to nourish it than what a smaller body requires.

On the next day New York had the appearance of a conquered city: all the traffic was stopped, while thousands of my countrymen marched through it, horse and foot, like an army of occupation. This was on 17th March, and New York was returned to its owners the following day, and the American people settled down to freedom and quiet for another three hundred and sixty-four days, after which it would all happen again.

On 18th March I went to Philadelphia, and gave my lecture the next day. I saw in that lecture-hall something I had never seen before (not a rare experience for me in America); and that was a type-writer on which a man was keeping pace with a speech. As my talk was afterwards printed with lectures by four others, in a book published by the University of Pennsylvania he must have kept pace with me better than I thought could be possible. I was not able to give him any assistance, because though I had thought a great deal of what to talk about I had nothing in writing but some notes on a half-sheet. Of technique I told them nothing, because I had heard too many people talking about technique, and I believed that, the more you practised an art, the less you had to say about the technique of it, your mind being much occupied by something more important. If I had to talk of technique I should prefer to talk of the technique of some art I had never followed: I could talk about the mallets and chisels and rules of sculpture, because I am not a sculptor, so that the sight of the thing itself, the art in its glory, would not come between my eyes and those external things. In any art I have followed I get glimpses of technique rather by looking backwards and seeing what I have done, than by looking at such things before I begin, and then trying to make a work of art by rule. And so I asked them to look

at the drama as a work of art, and not as a mathematical problem, and to begin their work only when there had come to them the dramatic idea, a thing so seldom mentioned in dramatic critiques, as though the diamond cutters of Amsterdam should talk only of cutting, and never mention a diamond. I told them the only test I know of a good play, a play that the public wants; and that is whether or not it can quicken the pulse-beats of an audience. And I gave them a rough-and-ready test of a bad play, which is to hear people saying that the dialogue is very good. Not that the dialogue should not be very good, but there is something wrong with a house or its hospitality if you hear people coming away from a dinner praising the bricks. Of course you can't have a play without dialogue, or a house without bricks. Well, as I have said, the lecture is printed, and I will not attempt to reprint it here.

To finish any piece of work is pleasant for a while, and the kind welcome of the University increased that pleasure for me.

For the whole time that I was in Philadelphia I was put up by Mr. Thomas S. Gates. Whatever interest there may be in Mr. Pond's exhibits, Mr. Gates, with solicitous kindness to me, did not invite any of his neighbours to come round every day, but asked them all on one day before I left, and it was very pleasant to meet them all. He lived in a very comfortable country house, not a palace: his partner in his business preferred a palace, and had therefore built one, and lived in it near by. Indeed the whole way out from Philadelphia, which was twelve miles away, there were big houses every few hundred yards, on the average about the size of a large English country-house, and in every variety of styles. I asked where this great parade of country-houses ended and was told that it didn't end, leaving in my mind the picture of a wide road going all the way to the Pacific, with a palace or big house every hundred yards or so. One of these was Mr. Widener's house, which was quite close, a house which few museums in the world can surpass; for instance he had fourteen Rembrandts, and a room full of Van Dycks, and he had many old masters besides those, and some beautiful tapestries, and eight pieces of work by Benvenuto Cellini. This great street stretching away out of sight with its great houses did not much interfere with the countryside, and wild woods came quite near to it. Of course when I use the word country-house I refer only to the appearance of these houses; obviously they could not be of the country in the way that our country-houses are; there were too many of

them for that; and the principal interest of their owners must have been with the town, to which they were linked by their motors.

There was a little snow powdering the ground when I arrived, but the robins had come, as they call a thrush-like migrant that comes in March, and whose coming is a sign of the spring.

CHAPTER XXII

VOTES AND UMBRELLAS

WALKING IN THE GARDEN OF MR. GATES' CHARMING HOUSE I SAW A TRELLIS-work with rose-trees on it all up his wall; and I pointed out to him that this would be rather easy for a burglar to climb, and my polite host agreed with me. Then I looked closer and hastily apologised for having thought the American business man so simple, for every few inches the trellis was cut to within a sixteenth of an inch of the surface.

Every other day while I was there I had what was called a conference at the University; that is to say I took a class of young men interested in writing plays. I particularly remember one who told me of a play that he wanted to write on an incident in one of Poe's tales, a grim and haunting incident that might have made a thrilling play. I wonder if it was written and what became of it.

I lunched with Owen Wister in his house at Bryn Mawr. He and his daughter had come to see us in Kent, and it was very pleasant to meet them again. A fine head of an elk on his wall set us talking of the wilds and planning to return to them, which I did the following year, but in the other direction, eastwards. A day or two later I lectured at Bryn Mawr College, and afterwards at tea the subjects on which I had lectured standing up, and others, were discussed for some while in a comfortable chair. Soon after this I left the kindly hospitality of Mr. Gates, and of the University of Pennsylvania, and returned to New York.

Somewhere on this trip, I heard afterwards, a reception was being given me, and one lady asked another if she was going to it; but the other lady could not possibly meet me, because she had heard it repeated that I had said that some day there might possibly be another war. Her blindness was by no means indigenous to America, for a little while after that, two years I think, I was asked to speak at a luncheon of schoolteachers in the City of London, mostly from the British Empire, though there were a few from Scandinavian countries, and I said, I remember my exact words, "Do not teach your children that there is a reasonable probability that there will never be another war." And a man wrote to one of the papers next day, unconsciously quoting Southey's little Wilhelmine, and saying, "Lord

Dunsany has said a very wicked thing." The motive inspiring letters to the papers is nearly always crystal-clear, and malice is never able to conceal itself, and there was none of it in this letter and the writer was evidently burning with sincerity. Therefore, I said to myself, the world for the moment is safe; while people feel like that there can be no war. And that feeling was pretty general then. Whatever was most savage in Nature had been recently well satisfied, and the League of Nations ably expressed all the world's desire for peace. But they thought the world agreed with them, when they only agreed with the world. Would the world listen to them for a moment when it should want something that they did not want? Peace was soon to be like crinolines and poke-bonnets, and the poor old gentlemen at Geneva were out of fashion. They had only their umbrellas, which were not of very much use, and their votes, which were of none; while Mars was very quietly sharpening his sword. And if anyone thought that he heard the sound of the whet-stone, that was not a thing to speak of in decent society.

Writing one's memoirs can be a mournful thing. For the rest of the time that I was in New York I was put up by Mr and Mrs. Percy Rockefeller in their flat, and for all their kindness I can now never thank them any more. Major and Mrs. Putnam are also long dead.

Mr and Mrs. Rockefeller were not at home all the time; but, whether they were there or not, I always had a bedroom and a sitting-room in their flat overlooking the Hudson. In the sitting-room that they gave me there were three pictures: one was a small old picture with a background of those steep blue mountains that only the Old Masters saw, and another was a large picture by Titian, showing a cardinal about to draw aside a red curtain, and looking at you over his shoulder, and there were red curtains in the room designed to match the picture, or rather to extend the idea of it, so that you almost seemed to be in the room with the cardinal. The picture suggested a poem to me, and I print it here in memory of two very kind people.

On A Picture

(In Memory of Mr and Mrs. Percy Rockefeller)

Before the curtains' ruddy gloom

With hand to draw them back he stands
To show — who knows what hidden room?
Or open on who knows what lands?

A moment and he will have thrown
The curtain's heavy fold aside,
And yet five centuries have flown
And fifteen generations died,

Since Titian caught that hand in air.
And, like a rock by which is cleft
Some torrent, it is shining there,
And time roars by to right and left.

A letter I wrote to my wife on 6th April gives a glimpse of my life in New York. Part of it tells: "*I dined alone here and went for a walk and looked in on the Roulands. This is a marvellous city: there is a vast building at the end of this avenue with a curving road running through it, and Mrs. Rockefeller tells me that trains run through this building, in the basement where other people keep rats. And the shops are like Paris, and the hospitality is like that of romantic fiction. —*

"*7th April.*

"*Mrs. Rockefeller rang up this morning to ask if I would go for the week-end to Greenwich, in the country* 30 *miles away. I have to be back to broadcast here at* 8 *pm on Sunday, but I'm to motor down after lunch with Avery Rockefeller*."

From the Rockefellers' beautiful house at Greenwich we walked in the woods with their two wolf-hounds, whose job by night was to guard the house. We passed a house in the wood, which was being guarded by a collie against the wolf-hounds; but, as we went on, the attraction of hunting in the wood seemed more to the collie even than guarding the house, so he joined the wolf-hounds, and between them, in spite of Mrs. Rockefeller's efforts to save it, they soon killed a woodchuck. By a little lake in the wood we saw Seton Thompson's house, but it was then empty. Woods like these are very welcome when they come near to great cities. They give mankind the generous feeling of having spared a conquered foe. Or is it by chance the

other way about? Is it the wild that must be victorious in the end? And is a wood or a forest or a jungle, close up against a city, like an army that Nature has halted, waiting to rush in as soon as man is too idle or ill to resist, or too self-satisfied to be on his guard, or too much occupied with some other enemy. Meanwhile in India and in America, and in many another land, these two great powers often stand facing each other, forest and city. We do not know how it will end. One way or the other; for those two will hardly face each other idly for ever; they are both too active for that. Already the scouts are out from the jungle and forest. Thistledown and innumerable seeds float into the cities, and find no foothold for a while. And then one day the great machines that hold Nature in scorn feel a touch of fear, not of Nature, but of other machines, and the sirens begin to wail, and they and the other machines go down together; and where factories had stood the scouts of the forest find foothold, and the forests get to know, and Nature comes back to the streets that had thought not to see her again.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE WOLF AT THE DOOR

ONE DAY I DINED WITH MAJOR PUTNAM'S SON, MR. G. P. PUTNAM AND HIS wife, the famous air-woman who lost her life flying the Pacific in 1937, and Mr and Mrs. Beebe and others. We dined in New York harbour on the *Isle de France*, which gave me a very interesting glimpse of the twentieth century, for the decoration of this great ship was entirely of that century. If you go to China you like to see it looking Chinese, and not imitating, say, England; for then you might just as well stay at home. In the same way I like to see a century looking like a century, and not ashamed of itself, aping some better century, or, to use its own language, some correcter period. The reason I hate "correct periods" is that the moment the blight of one of them comes down on an age, the essential thing about all design is gone. The essential thing about design is not whether Jacobean, Queen Anne or Georgian is the correcter period, but whether the design is alive or dead, whether the craftsman is trying to make something beautiful or something correct. There is a joy, or at least a contentment, in trying to do beautiful work, and this joy or contentment will shine back out of the work, to illuminate the spirits of others and become part of pleasant memories, perhaps to be carried far through space and time, by travellers remembering their homes, by old men remembering the haunts of their childhood, and it will be the intention of the worker to give this pleasure, and he will be glad to think he has done it. But the workers that they will get to make what they call genuine antiques will take no pleasure in it, and no pleasure will be put into the making of them; all this is dead work, following exact patterns; and the object of it is not to content but to trick; and the sham that they have put into work will be in it for ever. The whole of the reign of King Edward VII, and many years before it, and many years after, was the period of the genuine antique; I do not know what other name could possibly be given to its furniture. When writing to my wife I said of the *Isle de France,* "*I never saw anything like it on land or sea. It was a triumph of pure 20th-century work: portholes by Lalique, fine modern furniture, the furniture of the renaissance that has by now definitely followed that* 30 *or* 40 *years of the genuine antique, most beautiful ironwork*

in such things as gates etc., vast red pillars, modern statues and pictures that were practically sane, and more than I can describe of what was as new to the eye as anything the furthest traveller could find in any land."

I am not comparing Lalique with Chippendale or with Sheraton, but live work with dead, craftsmen with imitators. Some say "I greatly prefer the correct period. And you can't tell the difference when it's done by an expert." But I know no voice shriller than the voice of a sham, and to me it cries aloud whenever I meet it. Chippendale would never have been heard of if the curse of the genuine antique had been known in his time, as our great craftsman Ernest Gimson has hardly been heard of. If one enquires further, as to why it was that people in England suddenly deserted the custom of their ancestors and no longer made honest furniture for themselves, I think the reason is that a period of bad taste entered English houses early in the reign of Queen Victoria, evoked by the ostentation of men for whom machinery had made too sudden wealth, and fostered by the bad example of the work of the machine itself. After a while people turned away from ugly designs to find something calmer and lovelier; but the craftsmen were now starving, or, worse still, working for the genuine-antique-mongers, so householders turned back to the men who were dead, when they needed new furniture; and soon the genuine-antique-mongers were doing as thriving a trade as the body-snatchers or resurrection men, of whom Dickens tells, though the resurrection men did at least supply medical students with genuine bodies. Under such conditions an honest craftsman like Ernest Gimson, unable to show a birth-certificate of the correct period, must have found it harder to get employment than any craftsman had ever found it before. But now a new spirit was showing, and designers were designing again. Only the other day a member of the staff of the B.B.C. said to me of the internal decoradon of Broadcasting House, "I am afraid it 'dates' rather." And I realized there was truth in that, and the same might apply to the *Isle de France.* But that is exactly as it should be! The early 20th century had left its mark on the ages, as no period can do which merely apes another.

The designers of the upholstery of the *Isle de France* had not only felt, which is the most necessary thing for a designer to do, but had also thought. You might not suppose that it required much thought to shade an electric light, but it is astonishing how many people are unable to do it. The problem is to arrange three things in the following order; the eye, the shade,

the globe. But look round you, my reader, if not too much dazzled by the glare, and see in how many houses the following is the order; the eye, the globe, the shade (except for the flies on the ceiling, for whom the arrangement is perfect). It is known that an electric light requires a shade, so a shade is always bought, but in about half the houses in England it is put on the wrong side of the globe, like a present that nobody wanted, put away in an attic. It is known that a bright light flashed in his face may dazzle a burglar; but they dazzle themselves. In the *Isle de France* there were gigantic vases, over 7 feet high, and hidden in these were the electric globes, which shone upwards, lighting the whole room. We, who are a seafaring people, make our ships more like ships: other countries make them more like floating houses. But I will not further digress by an investigation of these two methods.

I was asked to broadcast, which gave me an opportunity to renew my thanks for much hospitality that had been shown me, and I read a few of my poems. It is curious to think that one may go to a microphone one evening and have a greater audience than Keats or Shelley are likely to have dreamed of having ever. When I entered the broadcasting building I could feel all round me that increased intensity that you might find in a circus or amongst the homes of any of the arts; indeed this was somewhat like the world's circus.

I was invited to what we should consider in England quite a large luncheon-party, a thousand people. One speaker, speculating about the distance at which he would be heard, made into the microphone a little dig at Canada, alluding to the "frozen wastes" over which his voice would travel; but the microphone was only an amplifier, not extending its usefulness beyond that room, so that the little dig had the somewhat sad air of a dog in a city trying to scratch up pavement.

I went with Mrs. Rockefeller to Mozart's opera, and the next night she took me to Mrs. Harriman's box to see *Tristan,* and so I met another very kind American hostess. Next day I started off to give four lectures in what I hoped was to be the neighbourhood of New York, but I learned from Mr. Pond that the neighbourhood stretched further than I had thought. I went first to Wells College at Aurora near Lake Kayuga, and afterwards to Cornell College at Ithaca. Part of the time I spoke, and for the rest of it I read from my plays and stories. But there is nothing that one can record about a lecture, for even a speech taken down verbatim is a different thing

to read than to hear, and speaking and writing are different arts. It may be too that there is an essential difference between speaking to an audience that you can see, and addressing one through the ether, (unless one can sense the unseen audience in some unknown way), for an audience is to a speaker something like what the canvas is to the painter, or rather more than that, say rather what the violin is to the musician.

As for reading plays, it is only by reading his play aloud himself that an author can ever convey its exact meaning; so much depends on our tones when we speak, that print or typescript can scarcely convey what a character in a play is driving at; and an actor who has never seen the author may conceivably play quite a different character from the one the author saw, a plausible, even a reasonable character, but one that, pulling in a different direction from the one in which the author aimed the play, must sooner or later wreck it. The greater the skill of the actor, the bigger the smash must be, if he and the author are pulling in different directions. In prose the meaning should be clear enough without the author having to read it, but there is a thing in prose that might possibly be missed if not so read, and that is the rhythm. I have seen prose that had no rhythm, but rhythm to me is as important in prose as in verse, and though I have known at least one man who said that, if you had anything to say, it couldn't possibly matter how you said it, yet by some law that is altogether beyond our argument and certainly beyond my understanding, no really great or noble thought is ever uttered without a certain rhythm in prose, or metre in verse, which are a part of the grand air that is natural to it and by which it may always be recognized. Metre and rhythm may be said to be the ships that carry thoughts to posterity, and without which very few drift so far.

At Cornell College I saw something that I had never seen before, numbers of worn-out motor-cars, lying where they had been thrown away. In our civilization the motor was almost new, but here was Time treating them like old boots or hats, things with whose wearing out we were already familiar. And there was a dog there that belonged to all of them, and obeyed none. I suppose he saw no reason to obey any undergraduate, feeling himself practically one of them. One of them, at one of those gatherings at which one sits and talks after a lecture, said to me, "What a good name Sime is for Sime." I did not quite agree, and said that I thought I could think of a better. So they asked me what, and I suggested Rhibelungzanedroom or

Rhibelungzaha, which they agreed would have been more appropriate for this great and mysterious artist.

I went on to Pittsburg, where I was kindly entertained by Miss Sutton, and welcomed at her door by an old negro whose amiability I remember yet. There I lectured at the Twentieth Century Club, or rather I read, at their request, the whole of my play, *IF.* Then I returned to New York, stopping the night in Harrisburg, where I remember noticing a very neat bullet-hole in the glass of a taxi just behind the driver's head. Another lecture when I got to New York, and there I met among other friends an old friend, Alan Rogers, a nephew of Mr. McVeagh, of Fasnacloich, who had often stayed with us in Ireland and had become a great friend of my son, whose contemporary he was. He took me afterwards to his flat, with another man and two girls, for whom the show was extended a little and I read one of my short stories for them. Next day Alan Rogers sailed for Japan, where his uncle was ambassador, to begin his diplomatic career, and he later sent me from there a delightful print of a Japanese swordsman, whose sword and eye and every rippling muscle revealed the man's heart's desire, which was to mow men's heads. And later he brought me from Siam two chess-knights exquisitely carved in ivory, which were given to him by a Siamese prince with whom he used to play chess.

I was soon off again, going to Boston to stay the night with my friend Mr. Ellery Sedgwick, and on next day to Brunswick to give a lecture at Bawdoin College. Wooden houses began to appear beside the train, nod scrubby woods, which showed, if the cold did not do it, that we were now some way North. It was the country from which Major Rogers drove the Indians in the middle of the 18th century. I read of him in a thrilling book that was given to me some years later by Mr. Evans, the senior partner of Heinemann's, who published it. It was called the *North West Passage,* which was what Major Rogers used to dream about, but he led a very active life besides dreaming. This great leader of men had one extraordinary deficiency, if the author of the book is to be relied on, a deficiency which makes the story of his military life as odd as would be the reminiscences of a one-armed boxer: he appeared to have little idea of a commissariat, and would march from the sack of a well-provisioned town and presently starve, and he would travel starving by rivers without any thought of fish-hooks. Nevertheless it was probably due to him that some of these wooden houses were built and safely inhabited. I had been interviewed at every town I had

visited, even in Harrisburg where I had only stayed a night to break the journey, but even when the train by which I now travelled stopped at a station a lady got in for this curious sport, while a photographer on the platform set up his camera. I did not grudge any ideas I might have to anyone that might want to hear of them; but, as I had a cold and it was freezing hard, I explained that they could all get on very well without seeing my photograph. I had an uncle who used to take a strange pleasure in interviews; and, happening to arrive in America at this time and not finding anybody to interview him, he resorted to an odd expedient to secure a few press-cuttings, or clippings as they are called in the States.

I lectured and read at Bowdoin College, and then came the usual talk afterwards in another room to a smaller audience. I think I talked then about an ideal which I have long held, which is that everyone should choose a calling from which others will benefit, in fact that he should work for and not against mankind. Making a box of matches, even a walking-stick, or digging in a garden, are examples of the first kind; working the three-card-trick at race-meetings is an example of the second, though I don't think I gave them any examples; nor are they necessary, for a man always knows which of the two kinds of work he is doing. It is a difficult topic on which to speak; for many among one's audience may have made their choice already, and if one or two of them should have chanced to have made the wrong choice they will resent advice that has come too late, whatever they might have done had it come betimes. And yet it is a topic of some interest to the world; for, if a philosophy can be given in a sentence, mine is that the wolf is always at the door. By this I mean that one should live as the woodman lives at the edge of the forest, keeping his door locked and its timbers sound, and knowing that when the door decays or is carelessly left ajar the wolf will force its way in. If anything at all is wrong with our people; if they cheat each other, poison each other, live too luxuriously... but need I go on? We have all seen what happens. Only do not blame the wolf; do not merely abuse Hitler. Do I like Hitler? No. I dislike even his moustache. But abuse is waste of time. Let us stick to our own job, making all about us sound, and be sure that the wolf will always stick to his, which is to sit in the cold and wait till we forget him or till our door rots, and then to follow the nature of the beast and to do such things as many wall always assure us nobody would dream of doing nowadays. Those nowadays! How different we thought them from the days of Attila! We all know better now.

Yet in a few years Hitler and Attila will be forgotten, and a few people will be holding commerce to be more important than the thing to be bought, or the man who buys, and a few others will be making other mistakes, and one day the few will have become a sufficient proportion of a nation for Nature herself to notice them, and the wolf will rush in. I don't think an instance is needed; one need not say which door, and it may be a window. But when any door is unlatched or rotten the wolf will come, and there will always be one waiting. Can a little cheating, a little silly luxury, in a country bring an enemy from the ends of the earth? Is there any possible connection between these things? Some may ask that, so I had better give an instance. I have read that when the French Prince Imperial, in an ambush in Zululand tried to vault on to his horse, a piece of his horse's accoutrement that he gripped gave way, because it was made of sham leather. Surely a shop-keeper in England putting in a little dishonest work on that saddlery would have heartily derided anyone who suggested that any serious harm could come of it. And yet who knows what that young man might have become? His father had seized the throne of France before him, and so had his great uncle. And he would have had some military reputation to support him. Supposing he had had power in France 40 years later. That would have been in 1919. And he might possibly have lived to take a very different line some years after that, when Hitler entered the Rhineland. I don't even know that the story of the sham leather is true. But does the gap between a bit of dishonest work and a world deluged in blood seem now quite so wide as it did?

CHAPTER XXIV

AND SOME I GATHERED AT WORLD'S END AND SOME IN COMMON FIELDS

FROM THE KIND HOSPITALITY OF THE PRESIDENT OF BOWDOIN COLLEGE, and Mrs. Sils I returned to New York, where I continued my public loquacity. But I was soon back beyond Boston, lecturing to Wellesley College. I remember something of the air of the house in which I was entertained by Miss Cooke, an air that was friendly to the arts, which does not come from having any particular kind of furniture or pictures, but rather from a certain sympathy of those that live in a house with the ornaments by which they are surrounded, a feeling that probably makes the difference, subtle but quite unmistakable, between a live room and a dead one. And from this house I was taken next day to see Mrs. Harold Russell at Brookline, only a few miles away, and this house also seemed to shine with a bright personality that it either got from its hostess or that haunted its walls from some other influence. Once more I stayed a night with Mr. Sedgwick in Boston and returned to New York, and about the end of April I found myself attending one public dinner, one evening party and broadcasting from two different stations, and I think some other engagement, all in the same evening. And I suddenly realized that the only way to deal with such a situation, which showed no signs of abating, was to book a passage to England, which I did on the *Homeric;* and a few days later I went to see *Show Boat* with Mr and Mrs. Percy Rockefeller, and heard Paul Robeson sing "Old Man River," and they saw me down to the docks and I said good-bye to them and went on board the ship.

There was a full moon that night and I remember my thoughts, before I went to sleep in my cabin, going to the far side of it; not much of a flight for the imagination, especially while the moon was glaring so hugely, but it was sufficient to make a poem about the far side of the moon, that was the first of a series of poems which, stimulated by my journey, I wrote more regularly than I had written in verse as yet, and before this vein came to an end a longer journey in the following year provided fresh stimulant and new material. This poem which I called "*At The Time Of The Full Moon*" began,

It-is dark to-night in Moon country On the far side of its girth, It is all dark in the valleys Where none seeth Earth.

And I described the slow sunrise there on the following day, and the rising of Earth, which they never see on that side. It ended like this:

They never see Earth float over, Whoever they be.

And they know no hint of her purpose.

Neither do we.

On that journey I met among others an old Etonian who had been with me at Cornish's. He collected me for a club of old Etonian riflemen, which resulted in my going to Bisley that year to shoot for them. There the hat that had excited detectives near Cairo passed as unnoticed as a tall hat at a Buckingham Palace garden-party, and I met habitués of Bisley whom I had not seen since I was at Eton, some of whom looked as though they lived in the sand there and came out with their rifles whenever they heard firing. It is much the kind of life that I lived myself, though my rifle ranges were more among rabbits and big game.

Though broom was out and willows were yellow, Spring had not visibly touched America before I left; then came a week of the grey Atlantic, and, when I saw England, Spring was blazing there. Never before had I seen Spring with such suddenness, and a wonderful sight it is, when without any warning you see the Spring in its full glory. We went to our house in Kent, which is no bad place from which to see the Spring; and I wrote another poem there, and early in June I wrote my third Jorkens story, about East Africa. I also wrote at that time a short tale for the *Morning Post,* called *A Villa in Kent.* I rather liked the title; for, first of all, it was exactly what the tale was about, about a man who, tired of the big City, built a small villa at the edge of our downs; and, secondly, it was not entirely obvious, for the villa, which is only two miles from my house, is two thousand years old.

And then one night in June, after I had gone to bed, there came to me the scene of a poem more vividly than one had ever come before. It is hard to say what it was about; indeed I do not entirely know. I only know that I saw the scene very vividly, and I rightly felt that, if I did not get up and write it then, I should never write it. Had it been anything invented by my intellect I could have written it one day as well as another, but the feeling that I ought to get up and write it there and then was as strong as the vision itself. So for the first time in my life I got out of bed and went downstairs to write a poem, and it came without any difficulty, and I feel sure that I should never

have been able to write it had I left it until next morning. In case anyone wonders what it was about I append seven of its eight verses here: anyone reading it can tell what it is about as well as I can, possibly even better. I have mentioned in this book the papyrus-marshes, and dawn and sunset on North African mountains, and other things seen in my travels: I don't know the origins of all the things I have seen, but I describe them so far as I am able to do so: it may be just the same with a vision. Most of my poems are simple and very clear, but sometimes a vision may come as from a far country, and is neither to be preferred nor thought inferior to a poem about a hayfield in Kent.

The Enchanted People

It came, it came again to the scented garden, The call that they would not heed, A clear wild note far up on the hills above them, Blown on an elfin reed.

From the heath in the hidden dells of a moorland people It came so crystal clear That they could not help a moment's pause on their pathways, They could not choose but hear.

The very blackbird, perched on the wall by cherries, Ripe at the end of June, Made never a stir through all of his glossy body, Learning that unknown tune.

They needs must hear as they walked in their valley garden, Surely they needs must heed That it came from a folk as magical and as enchanted As ever blew upon reed.

Surely they must arise in the heavy valley,
Sleepy with years of night,
And go to the old immortal things out of fable
That danced young on the height.

But the moss was black and old on the paths about them,
And the weeds were old and deep,

And they could not remember who were high on the uplands;
And they needed sleep.

And they thought that a day might come when someone would call them
With a song more loud and plain.
And the call rang past like birds going over a desert,
And it never came again.

Of my poems I may say what I said in another poem about my tales,
And some I gathered at World's end
And some in common fields, though my prose is more of the first kind and my poems are usually of the second. For instance a poem called *Night,* that I wrote in that same month of June, is sheer realism, of the Sahara, in its first two verses, and of astronomy in the third, while the fourth is only a simple speculation.

Night

Night falls on the lone
Sahara, and spark by spark
Arabs I have not known
Light fires in the dark.

Of the specks of ash in the smoke
Which atom knows
From what fire it awoke,
Or whither it goes?

In the wilds of Space, in the night,
Spiral nebulae Twirl light upon light,
Whereof one are we.

Who can say for what task
They arose, or whither they slip?
And all the Spirits I ask

Stand, finger on lip.

All that June and July I wrote poems, and it was probably an encouragement to me to know that the *Saturday Evening Post* would print them. They were printed in English papers too, but the *Saturday Evening Post* was at that time my principal stand-by, though they refused one that I called *The Inspiration,* perhaps because it seemed too strange a fancy. And it was a strange fancy: I remember going out on to the lawn at the end of July and the idea suddenly coming, the idea of an inspiration being in the air quite close, but sweeping past me to go to some other poet. With this exception the *Saturday Evening Post* took all my best poems and, with a very accurate judgment, refused all my inferior ones.

The Inspiration

An inspiration flew,
Hushing the evening air,
Thrilling the twilight through
With something wistful and rare.

I felt the brush of its wings
As it came sheer through space,
From the place of immortal things,
Near to this very place.

By the sudden speed of its flight
And the awe of all things near,
I knew that it brought a light
For many a weary year.

It needed nothing of us
But the mere stroke of a pen,
And I knew that the ravenous
Years could not conquer it then.

By birds hushed in their song,
By a myriad insects stilled,
It swept, travelling strong,
That its purpose might be fulfilled.

As a dog has a sudden sense
Of a strange step in the night,
So Nature grew more intense
As it felt the sweep of that flight.

And unto whom it was sent,
Silently, rapidly,
On and away it went,
For it was not for me.

From Kent we went to Arden, and I wrote a poem in the garden there, called *From a Yorkshire Valley,* about the journey being made at that time of the year by the seeds of the rose willow. We had two more shooting-parties in the lovely county of Yorkshire that year, and for part of November we were in London. On Armistice Day there I went to Whitehall to see that most moving ceremony, the two-minutes' silence, near the Cenotaph, and a poem came to me, and I went into the Garrick Club and wrote it down at once. Walking back to Cadogan Square I stopped at the Athenaeum and telephoned to my wife to ask her what she thought of the poem, and as it was only six lines I began to read it to her. For some reason far beyond our understanding, which we never seek to enquire, the telephone-Miss cut me off in the middle and switched my conversation on to herself. So she heard me reading poetry. This enraged her, and she thought that I was reading it to her, as indeed I was, though not by choice. So angry was she that, instead of asking me what I was saying, she said, "What are you doing? What are you doing?" It is one thing to say something that one shouldn't, such as poetry to a young woman, but it is much more serious to *do* something one shouldn't, and she was speaking in the voice of one about to call the police; whereas I could only think of asking her what *she* was doing. And eventually, whatever it was, she undid it, and put me on once more to Cadogan Square. The poem was published next day in the *Daily Express.* I hope my reader won't think, like that telephone clerk, that I have been

offering him or her too much poetry in this chapter. I had better close it, in case.

CHAPTER XXV

CAPABLANCA AND KIPLING

I AM AFRAID THAT THIS CHAPTER MAY BE NO BETTER THAN THE LAST, for, referring to dates of old poems, I find that I did one of my best that December, and three more the following February. These poems were called *Art and Life, The Hunter Dreams In His Club, Snow On The East Wind,* and *The Watchers*. Of *The Watchers* a critic said a curious thing, when Messrs. Putnam published it that year (1929) in a book that I called *Fifty Poems*. He said that it was very like Mr. De la Mare's *Listeners.* That is a serious accusation, but I do not mention it now, for the first time, in order to make any defence; but to show how irresponsibly it is possible for a book to be reviewed. The best line of defence, if one were making one, might be to say that one had never read *The Listeners,* and the worst admission would be to state that one knew it by heart, but the second of these is true. What was wrong with the criticism was that the critic could have read no further than the title, which is remarkably like that of *The Listeners.* What I am contending here is that a critic should read further than that. De La Mare's poem is a most strange and visionary thing; indeed it is a very beautiful description of a vision, in which one may look for the meaning and perhaps even find it, but, found or not, it is a very beautiful poem. Mine was merely a meaning, a simple discussion between two spirits that chanced to look at our world, as to which race was likely to dominate it; apparently the mammoth, but there is something a little gross about him in spite of his strength, so, to avoid making any mistake, one says to the other, "Come again in a million years."

Through the vault where the stars are sprinkled
Ages passed from the world away.
All of that time Orion twinkled.
Nothing changed in the Milky Way.

And they come again, and this time they see Man.

Again they stood where the world was rolling,

Again they looked, and saw this time Man,
Heard the roar of his engines coaling,
Scanned his cities to guess his plan;
Peered through clouds that his smoke turned sour,
Even pried on his hopes and fears.
"Yes," they said, "he has surely power.
But, come again in a million years."

Art and Life tells of things that flash by with the years and that an artist tries to catch with brush or pen if he has the time, such as:

The huge red sun of November
Threatening snow,
Dark woods that seem to remember
Ages ago.

And
All shapes of rocks and of trees
That a rune has enchanted,
All sounds that sigh upon seas
Or lands that are haunted.

And a few other things.

The Hunter Dreams In His Club almost explains itself.

One more poem I will quote, for the sake of the closeness of the translation of meteorology into poetry. An East wind had blown bitterly for three days, and we read of deep snow in the Caucasus and of wolves coming down from the mountains; and on 15th February, after the third night of storm, there was a dead calm and the fields all shining with snow. This was my translation of that event into verse:

A black horse came to visit us,
His hooves on the hills drumming
All way from the Caucasus,
And was three days coming.

On his back was a lady light,

And cruelly did she ride him.
He dropped dead at our doors by night
As she softly stepped from astride him.

I got over seventy woodcock this season, so perhaps that wind helped. And I had some shooting with neighbours in Meath, besides what my own woods supplied, and a shooting-party at Dromana in Co. Waterford with Mr and Mrs. Villiers Stuart, where we shot woodcock in a forest that had been on those hills for ever. I also had occasional days with the Meath. Here is a day from my hunting diary, after the Hunt Ball, which had been at our house. "A great hunt. Found at once in the Railway wood. He left immediately for Warrenstown, turned right, up the hill of Glane, straight through it, down the other side, over the black boggy ditch that we crossed after the Hunt Ball two years ago and, taking the same line as then, went up the hill to Tullaghmedan. Fell at a fence among loose strands of iron wire somewhere the other side of Tullaghmedan. Came to the difficult fences of two years ago; went left-handed this time instead of right-handed to avoid the lane which I thought I remembered as leading nowhere useful. Got round a house by much jumping, built on a mearing fence and seeming to have no approach whatever from this side. Passed Culmullen where he did not stay for an instant, fording the Derrypatrick river. Cantered very slow here, my horse not being up to my weight and blown by the fall, yet did not lose the hunt and having left a great many behind me, probably at the wire fence. Came into country that I did not know, always going South. Then somewhere near Kilmore cross-roads, along the Moynalvey river, we ran out of scent. He had gone right past Baltrasna covert, had pointed for Summerhill, and then for Pratt's, but we lost him. Got on to the road and jogged to Doran's forge, hounds going on to draw Gal trim. From Doran's forge I rode home with the General, Captain and Mrs. Barrett and Jock Wilkinson. The horse carried me well though he came down again at the last fence. As fine a hunt as one could wish from the door of a ball-room."

In the spring we went to Kent, and there one stormy night, listening to the wind in a chimney that I had known all my life, but thinking more of the future than of the past, I gave expression to certain ominous feelings which have been so well justified that I lately added a verse. I print the whole poem here:

The Voice In The Chimney

There's a wind in a chimney of old,
In the house where I lived as a child,
That is telling me tales as it told
Long since when the weather was wild.

It is telling the same tales now,
Of leaves to their wandering hurled,
Of the startled birds on the bough
And of what will come to the world.

And just as I wondered in vain
At the tales that it roared to me then,
So now, when it mutters again,
I guess not its warning to men.

1940

But if not interpreted quite
Were the warnings it hinted of old
There's a noise in the chimney to-night
Whose intent is too easily told.

Early that same spring Capablanca, perhaps the greatest chessplayer the world has ever known, and at that time Champion of the World, came to London and gave a display at Selfridge's. He played simultaneous chess against three representatives from each of the seven counties that are nearest to London, which means roughly the seven strongest counties in England, and Mr. Selfridge offered a prize to whatever county did best against him. I was asked to be one of the players from Kent. We sat at a row of tables in a long room with a large crowd leaning over us, and Senor Capablanca walked along the row. I was rather anxious that it should not be thought that I had been chosen to play merely because I was president of the Kent Chess Association, and the only way of showing that was to hold out

for at least half an hour. I have mentioned earlier my ignorance of the openings, and Capablanca, who of course had first move on every board, chose the opening that probably corresponds with whatever is the most complicated theory in any science, that is to say the Ruy Lopez. I made for my fourth move one that should have come later, not realizing how much it mattered. Of this simple blunder Capablanca naturally took immediate advantage, and I looked very unlikely to hold out for half an hour.' But then I began to play, and by sacrificing a pawn got out of the muddle into which I had strayed, though playing with a pawn down against Capablanca did not seem a very hopeful proposition. Curiously enough my blunder saved me, for in the complications of an ordinary Ruy Lopez as played by Capablanca I should no doubt have been easily beaten; but the clock went on and I was still playing, and at last I got the pawn back, and at the end of four hours when play ended, I had an obvious draw, and Capablanca conceded rather reluctantly a draw to my neighbour on my left, so that Kent had scored one point against him, a draw being half; and a player from Hertfordshire had won his game, and, these two counties being equal, the man who had won and we two who had drawn were all given a prize by Selfridges. For Capablanca had beaten all the rest. As the prize was handed to me the representative of the firm who gave it said "And if there is anything you would prefer, do let us know." The prize was wrapped up in a box, and I said I was sure that there would not be anything that I should prefer to it. But when I got home and opened the box, I found that the prize was a cocktail-shaker; a very handsome one, but still to a chessplayer as useless as reindeer-harness to anyone in a Southern country. So in spite of what I had said, I wrote asking if, with the exception that I have mentioned, I could be given anything else, and I was kindly given, duly inscribed, the largest and most useful thermos flask that I have ever had, and after nearly fifteen years it is as good as ever. My game with Capablanca was recorded in *The Times,* in the Chess Column, that year.

At the end of June I wrote two tales, both of which I have broadcast, called "How the Tinker Came to Skavangur" and "A Charm Against Thirst." The first of these I broadcast that year, when the B.B.C. were still housed at Savoy Hill; the other I have broadcast twice and it has been often printed: it is a Jorkens story, and tells how a man who has bought a charm against thirst from a witch is dying of thirst in a part of the Sahara that I know well, and where the story is quite possible; and the charm holds out

against thirst, and he is drowned by a sudden torrent from one of Sahara's mountains. And then one day in July my eyes felt sore and, looking in the glass, I noticed that the whites of them had turned red. So I sent for a doctor, and first of all he asked me what I had been eating for dinner the day before. This I was able to answer by handing him a menu, on which everything I had eaten was written in gold, for I had been to a regimental dinner of the Inniskilling Fusiliers. But the doctor was on the wrong tack and, with a better shot, soon diagnosed German measles. For one day I felt pretty ill, and then for a fortnight came isolation that was all the harder to bear from the fact that the Kiplings had been coming to stay with us and we had to tell them to keep away. And then, with nothing else to do, I wrote a short story, as tales of ten thousand words are called, though to me so many words seemed to make a very long story. It was called "Our Distant Cousins," and was on a theme that I had had in my head some while, which was a tale of the planet Mars, where they had some very fine chicken-runs; but, though Man was, as everyone has supposed, ahead of our branch of the human race, there was another race that had got still further ahead, and that kept Man as we keep chickens, and ate him when hungry. The *Saturday Evening Post* printed this story, and it also appeared in England in *Harper's Bazaar*. This is the tale that I have already mentioned, which raised the question of how to get to Mars.

Later we went to see the Kiplings in their lovely house in Sussex, as we did for many summers. I believe that the house belongs to the nation now, so that in describing it I tell my reader something of his own property. One went by a lane down a steep hill and came to a gate in a garden-wall, where one rang the bell and was shown along a pathway to the hall-door, sometimes by Mr and Mrs. Kipling. To one's right was the garden and to the left were very smooth lawns with a pond in the middle, and beyond the pond the largest poplar I know. Beyond the garden a stream ran under a wall of old red brick, told of in Kipling's own stories. And a sort of aerial hedge ran down one side of the garden, a row of limes that all met and were neatly clipped, a hedge that you could walk underneath. The paths of the garden were mainly made of old grindstones. "I owe these paths to Cobden," said Kipling, and explained that it was Cobden that ruined the English mills, and so he came by those grindstones. All this was down at the bottom of the valley, and Kipling had bought most of the land on the little circle of slopes that surround Batemans, so that it remains as secluded as when he first

knew it. In the house there was not a great number of ornaments, but all that there were were lovely and interesting. The dining-room is upholstered with very fine old Spanish leather, and there is another very pleasant room on that floor, in which was kept among other things the necklace of the magician in *Just So Stories,* which had been collected for Kipling by Sir Percy Bates, a friend of us both. Upstairs is the library, in which I think Kipling mostly worked, and on the stairs are the original illustrations in plasticine that his father did for *Kim.* In a glass case on that stair-case too was a genuine antique that would be a great prize in any shop that sells such things if it ever should get there. It is a cocoanut cut so as to make a drinking-mug, and on it is carved:

Out of this cup for twenty year
I arrack drank instead of beer.

For every reason it is unnecessary to explain that it is the drinking-mug of a sailor wrecked out East and cast away for quite a long time, and one of the reasons is that Kipling carved it himself, or else his father; I forget which. On the wall of the library hangs a framed cartoon, a jibe at Kipling, who had offended the Liberal party somewhere back about 1912 by an unwelcome suggestion that there might be a war and that it would come with aeroplanes. The cartoon showed the sky full of planes, and Kipling running away out of England. He told me he had written to the cartoonist after that war had come, asking him to name his price for the original, but his efforts had been disappointed and he had only been able to frame the print of it. His son's sword lay in that room.

I said that I would describe this house, but, beautiful as it was, it was only the setting for Mr and Mrs. Kipling, and it must be all altered now, however reverently the attempt be made to preserve the memory of the bright spirit that so illuminated it. Even when last we went there, in 1936, and Mrs. Kipling showed us all Kipling's manuscripts, before they were sent to the Universities to which he had bequeathed them, it was not quite the same. Now Mrs. Kipling is gone too.

There is not very much I can say of Kipling that the world does not know, for he was so like his work, and his letters were identical with it. That is to say he was full of mirth, so lightly repressed and so near the surface, that it was ready to break out at any moment, and a zest that one can only

call boyish, and a deep sympathy which made him probably the kindest man that I ever knew. He was of course very sensitive, or he could not have felt the emotions out of which his work is made, let alone have expressed them. One day at Bateman's he said to me, "You know, people say I am black. Baldwin is my first cousin: if I am black he is black too. I wonder how English people like being governed by a black man." He evidently felt those jealousies that are the shadows which gather round genius, and, for all I know, around all success.

Sometimes he came to see us in Kent, but he and Mrs. Kipling never came to stay after my unfortunate German measles, because her health soon became an anxiety to Kipling and I do not think they often left Bateman's for a night except to go to the South of France. But it is in Bateman's that it is more appropriate to describe him, in his own natural surroundings, in the Sussex he loved so much. His love of dogs is well known, and he lived with his Aberdeen terriers much as the world might expect. His love of children is well known too, and at Bateman's he planted a mulberry tree so that children could some day dance round it. His letters were, as I have said, so like himself that they can throw no new light on him, yet I print one of them here by the kind permission of Mrs. Bambridge.

Bateman's,
Burwash,
Sussex.

Nov. 21, 1931.

Dear Dunsany, My wife is suffering from a crippled hand or she would have written herself to thank you for the snipe. They are getting more and more rare in these parts: so our gratitude is the greater. (And there is "*company*" *for lunch to-morrow.) So all things work for good. —*

Talking of "*game*"*, we've just had a stroke of great luck. A family of white owls which had the overlordship of the place since the beginning, seemed to disappear for some years — we thought because a tenant blocked a little window into an attic. Now we find they are established most comfily in an old pigeon cote in the old mills with a family of all sizes and are*

carrying on trade (vide *castings) in the mice and rat line. That ought to mean good fortune.*

Our best wishes to you both and *to the boy.*

Most sincerely,
Rudyard Kipling.

That warm sympathy of which I have spoken flowed from him beyond his friends and he took a deep interest in my son in India, although he had never met him, but he knew much of his life in India from his letters, which I often showed to Kipling and which he read with delight.

When the news came at the beginning of 1936 that Kipling was dangerously ill the shock of the news immediately inspired a poem, and I almost began to write it, but I would not do so while he was yet alive, even though I should miss the inspiration by waiting. Very soon he died, and the idea of the poem was still in my mind and I wrote it at once and it was printed in *The Times.* This was the poem.

To Rudyard Kipling

What the world's lost I leave the world to say.
But I lament the falling of long sleep
On those blue eyes where mirth seemed couched to leap;
That watched so many customs, from Cathay
Right round to Sussex, and knew well the way
Of many workmen, whether tending sheep
Or great ships' engines far out on the deep;
And looked with love on all men's work and play.

A heavenly tavern with a sanded floor,
White sand of Muysenberg, I wish for you,
And heroes of all ages quaffing ale
Of heather honey; then the earthward door
Opens upon their talk and you come through,
And hushed at once is some immortal tale.

CHAPTER XXVI

IN THE HIGHLANDS

AMONG THE TALES THAT I WROTE THAT JULY WAS ONE CALLED "THE USE of Man," which concerned a question often asked in hunting countries by those who would exterminate their race, "What is the use of badgers?" I thought it only fair that, if the badger's survival must depend on a use being found for the badger which would be understood by men, the question should be asked of man and the answer expressed in terms of the badger. My tale was concerned with this very reasonable suggestion; and later when I was asked for some plays for the B.B.C., I decided, instead of waiting for an idea to come, which had been my invariable custom with plays and with all other forms of art, I would, as it were, dig in my own garden, and turn up one or two old ideas that I might find lying there. I therefore dramatised this story, which I had called "The Use of Man," and, under the same title, it has often been performed on the wireless. It tells how a master of hounds, adroit at getting on with farmers and others, is confronted before a jury of the spirits of animals with the very difficult question, "What is the use of man?"

I wrote a few more poems in August, and that year my gamekeeper, James Toomey, succeeded in luring a flight of ducks to a pond. He had been at it for some time, but now his efforts were so successful that in two flights in that month of August I shot thirty, and in later years the flight was even better. I went to see Gogarty in the house that he had built on an island in a Galway lake, perhaps influenced by Yeats's nine bean rows, and then we went to Arden for grouse-shooting, and from there I went on to Kildalton, where I shot two stags, one of them a royal, besides black game, grouse and others of the many things that may be shot at that lovely place. Thence I went on to Inverary, where in the park under the Highland hills I saw the finest trees I have ever seen, in a wood that their gigantic trunks made appear almost unearthly. It was a small party, consisting only of the Duke of Argyll, our host, and Lady Elspeth Campbell, his sister, and Ewen Cameron, an old friend that I had not seen for some years. He and the duke in the evening talked of many tales of the Highlands, with which they perhaps thought I could not fully sympathise. And then they talked of old

wines, which was still a subject of which they both knew more than I, until I said to the duke while they were discussing port: “I know what wine would taste best to you.” And, when he asked what, I said, “Any wine drunk out of the skull of a Cameron.”

I do not remember if he attempted any disclaimer, but after that they both regarded me as being as much of a connoisseur as themselves. But however much interested these two were in the history and legends of the Highlands, Lady Elspeth was a perpetual store of them, and I doubt if much was ever written about the Highlands, and I am sure nothing was sung of them, which she did not know. The Armada had come round that way, and she showed me a gun in the garden, designed I think by Benvenuto Cellini, which had been dredged up at Tobermoray. It was a beautiful gun, of the days when men’s work kept pace with their leisure, and so they were able to beautify all that they made. To-day our work is so far ahead of our leisure that we must make things only for their immediate purpose, and not bless any of them with any beauty other than what must come from all such of our work as is honest, shining, however grimly, from its sheer honesty and its perfect adaptability to its purpose. Man has something to say, and feels certain emotions, which in those days he stamped on everything lying around him: now he is in so much of a hurry that he openly doubts that there is as much time as there used to be. Does the last remark sound insane? That is the trouble. There is a certain amount of madness in the theory. And the signs of it seem to increase. In this desperate company of machines that we have been keeping lately we are living beyond our means, and the powers of flesh and blood are being greatly strained by the petrol and steam and steel of our terrible companions. This calm old gun, if I remember right, was made for a Duke of Pavia, and passed on by an old arrangement of lease-lend from him to the King of Spain for that splendid dream which, just before they fall, has come so often to tyrants, the conquest of the British Isles. Calm as a patient whom the fever has left, the old gun lay on the lawn at Inverary. Another thing that Lady Elspeth showed me there was a portrait of a beautiful duchess of Argyll of the 18th century, and she asked me, as all are asked who are shown that picture, what the great compliment was that the artist had paid to the duchess, and I think she said that only one man had ever guessed it. I got it, but I will not say what it was in order to spoil this very amusing puzzle. One day I was

taken out stalking by Mr. Angus Campbell, who brought me up to a stag, which I got on those lovely hills and I have the head still.

Only last year Lady Elspeth died, and in times like these, when one cannot even send a wreath, the only tribute I could offer was verse, and I append the lines here.

The olden Highland lays,
Legends forgotten long
By men of modern days,
Sang in one heart their song;

Sang as the blackbirds sing
Till planets come in sight
Through some long evening.
In that heart shone the light

Of burns that dance through glens,
And noon on miles of heather,
And dawn upon grey bens,
And winter's splendid weather.

And echoes lingered there
Of roaring stags. Where will
Those songs and echoes fare
Now that that heart is still?

CHAPTER XXVII

IN JUNGLES AND PALACES

THAT AUTUMN IN LONDON I WROTE SEVERAL STORIES, THREE OF THEM about the East, which is the direction that my thoughts so often seem to take that it needs no explanation; but the explanation may have been that the lure of the East, and a wish to see our son, was about to take us to India, and my thoughts had already gone on ahead of our journey, an idea that is best expressed by Robert Bridges where he says of a ship: "I there before thee, in the country that well thou knowest, Already arrived am inhaling the odorous air."

But one of those tales, that told of islands which we were to pass on the way, I deliberately left unfinished in order to complete it with what of all my ingredients I have most rarely used, local colour. Indeed I do not remember having ever used it before, for local colour I take to be something directly taken from the fields and the hills; whereas what I have always worked with has been such scenes as Earth has to show us, only after they have sunk down through my memory, perhaps as far as oblivion, and there simmered until they have exhaled what we call imagination. But now I used those scenes raw for a part of my story, as Benvenuto Cellini used a large untouched pearl for part of the body of a mermaid, which I saw in Mr. Widener's house in Philadelphia. For the wilds were calling to me again, and we started off in November. Of course we were not going only to the wilds; indeed India struck me later as something of a blend between the wild lands that I knew in Africa and, say, the Ritz. But it was the wilds that most attracted me, as they have always done periodically. Do we not all come, in a slightly varying number of generations, from the wilds? And perhaps there is in the blood of all of us a longing to return at times to them, like the craving that drives every stag in Scotland once a year to the sea; and it may be, and I hope I do not shock my reader by the suggestion, but it may be that the scheme that clothed the plains with forests and the mountains with snow is after all a better scheme than the one that we very clever people have invented whereby we have clothed so much of the world with pavement. Be that as it may, I who have trod a good many miles of pavement, hear at times the call of the lands that have not even roads, and I

was hearing it now, in fact I expressed that feeling in a short poem that I wrote and which was published in an American paper, but I forget the date. This was the poem:

The Call Sudden again That curious heavy whiff in a London square, Camels or strange tobacco, and out of the rain My heart has travelled eastwards to glittering air That floods up mightily over a golden plain To waken cities that I would visit again.

An American writer commenting on this poem asked, "How far did Lord Dunsany travel?" I travelled a long way, for it was a real feeling, as all that one puts into verse should be.

My friend Major Douglas Straight, an old member of the Beefsteak Club, had most kindly given me letters of introduction to the Nawab of Rampur and the Maharajah of Benares, and Lady Jersey had recommended us to her old friend the late Begum of Bhopal, a great ruler in India, and, when in England, a diplomat who appeared more skilful than those that are indigenous to our isles. We sailed in the *Mooltan,* and had a curious experience soon after we had entered the Indian Ocean, for one day outside my porthole we heard African voices, and looking out I saw a small sailing-ship, and Arabs or Somalis standing up and shouting and waving their shirts, which they continued to do until we stopped and for some while after. They said they were mariners in distress and in need of water and food; our captain said very little, but even if he had said all he thought I could not have printed any of it here. The mildest word would probably have been Piracy. But as there was no way of quite proving they were not what they said, he gave them all they wanted, and a few of them took it away in an ocean-going canoe that they launched from their ship, and we all noticed that they were in no hurry to drink the water that they were given. At the end of the voyage, when I was asked to thank the captain on behalf of us all, I said we had all we could possibly want, and suggested that intending travellers should be told that, if any of them should ever need more than that, all they had to do was to stand up in their seats and shout and wave their shirts for half an hour, and the captain would stop the ship and give them whatever they asked for. As usually happens in ships on long voyages we had a chess-tournament, and I won a small silver cup. One of the players was General Wardrop, going out to take up the command of the artillery in India, a good chess-player with whom I had many games. And much later, on a longer journey, I met his niece Miss Rosalie Wardrop, then

a driver in the M.T.C., and we had many games of chess, for chess runs much in families. Whether or not, in the ideal State, such families should be isolated it is for the inventors of utopias to say, the art of chess being very closely allied with the art that overturns cities. We arrived in Bombay and I had my first glimpse of India as we drove through the forest that comes to the edge of the town and saw villages by the roadside under the trees, built and inhabitated by men whose scheme of life was clearly not so unlike that of the forest as to harm it in any way. A sheet of corrugated iron is unmistakably the product of a factory, and a factory, however excellent, is of quite a different scheme to that of a forest, and so the two of them must always jar on each other. But there was no such incongruity here; the houses had come from the forest and not from the factory, and the people who lived in them had only one scheme to bother about, if it was anything to bother about at all. We have always two schemes to worry about, and to adjust as well as we can; and, being so unlike to each other, their clashes amidst our philosophy may be sometimes upsetting to it. For instance we wonder if it will be a hard winter this year, and what is the price of petrol, and the two thoughts do not easily fit together. If a man is wearing one black boot and one brown boot we notice it at once; but there are greater incongruities than this in our daily lives. As we drove back I remember seeing a fakir walking past a hoarding with all his worldly possessions, which were a piece of cloth that half covered him, a brass bowl and a long stick. Meanwhile the hoarding proclaimed "You MUST Have Mouthwasho." One wondered, for as long as this contented man was in sight, whether it was really so necessary to have Mouthwasho, or whether a mere mouth-wash might not do as well.

Then we took the train and went on to Bhopal, and saw by full moonlight the spires and pinnacles of the Western Ghauts before we went to sleep. At Bhopal we were entertained in the Guest House, and in the afternoon went to call on the old Begum, who had handed over the affairs of the State to her son. She was dressed with extreme simplicity: perhaps she felt that no finery she could wear could compare with the good roads stretching far away from the capital, and all the obvious signs of a well-governed state, so much of the prosperity of which was due to her.

One day Colonel Ikbal Mahomed Khan, one of the Nawab's A.D.C.s, took me to look for game in the jungle, and, though I shot nothing then, I greatly enjoyed my first day in the Indian jungle. The Nawab is one of the

best polo-players in India, that is to say in the world: he also told me a good deal about shooting tigers, when we dined with him and the Begum at the palace. I was anxious to get a tiger, and his Highness gave me every opportunity next day, when Colonel Ikbal Mahomed Khan took me to the jungle again, coming to the edge of it before dawn, when the tigers and sambhur go back from the open land to the forest, but it was not the best time of year and we did not see a tiger. We went some distance into the jungle by car and afterwards I went on in a bullock-cart, which is one of the best means of approaching game. I remember the vast peepul trees soaring up like the buttresses of a cathedral, and any especially venerable tree usually had one or two little bits of paper hanging from it, with writing upon the paper to say perhaps that the tree was sacred, or for all I know they may have been some form of prayer, similar to the bits of rags that were to be found on some Irish thorn-trees before Christianity came, and that are to be found there still. Sometimes we would come to a village all among the trees, and would go on into the mystery and the hush of the vast jungle again. I shot a nilghai there and a very fine sambhur. The sambhur is to our red-deer somewhat as the mammoth is to the elephant, and is one of the great prizes of the jungle.

So beautiful were the evenings there that I almost thought that raw truth in Bhopal might be material for art as malleable, as workable, as fiction. But it is not so; sheer truth, local colour, or whatever you call it, is to fiction for the purpose of the artist, very much what bright frozen snow is to thawing snow for the purpose of making a snowball. But this book is not a work of art; it is only the words of an artist talking about himself and, I hope, of sufficient things seen by him on the wanderings of his fancies and of his feet, for him to be forgiven for it. So this bit of raw description of the lake of Bhopal, without story or moral, may find its place here. This is what I wrote in the evening on 8th December, 1929.

BHOPAL

Too placid for water the lake looked like a calm unflashing jewel, some semi-precious stone set in a band of gold. Its length ran East and West. At one end the sun was setting in an arch of scarlet and orange, at the other end

the city of Bhopal seemed looking dreamily at the beauty of its domes and its small spires, flashing white in the water. A hill beside the sunset appeared to be quite transparent, so much of the orange glow there was between us and it. It was at that end that the band of gold seemed to be holding the jewel. The sun set and the hill turned blue. At once a fire that some brick-makers had lit, far down below the terrace on which I sat, became clearly visible, decked with a sudden beauty; and a mystery touched the smoke, drifting away slowly. Some diving bird now rose and left the water, he and his clear reflection going dark to an island. Singing came up to us from men that we could not see, among trees that were distant beneath us. Birds like swifts flew by below, but turned their wings upwards at the end of each burst of speed, and dallied awhile in the air, as swifts never do. From a long way down the voices of frogs came up to us faintly. More clearly a bird in the dimness called with notes like the voice of our thrush. The orange glow of the sunset faded away, darkness increased, and lights began to come out in the Palace a mile away over the water. The Oxford graduate that accompanied me asked me if I would excuse him for a little, while he said his prayers. All the while the real Bhopal gazed on at its beautiful image. Now a lilac glow began to appear above the bed of the sun, increasing in size and colour, till a great arch of it stood in the West, of the hue of the very darkest kind of lilac, supported on shafts of light. A temple bell tolled slowly and ceased. A pale blue tint began to steal over white marble. A star had long been shining. One more day was gone. Another night had come up from the halls of wonder.

* * * * *

One night we dined with Sir Oswald Bosanquet, the resident in Bhopal, and his niece, in his house looking out over the lake: an Indian poet and an Indian musician were his other guests. The musician had brought his drummer with him, and he played to us Indian music on strange instruments after dinner, while his drummer softly beat the accompaniment, sitting upon the floor. At first the musician sat on a chair or a sofa like us, but after a while the music seemed to carry him away from these western devices and he sat on the floor by his drummer.

From Bhopal we went on towards Delhi, stopping at Agra on the way. If the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals were to move their

offices from London and set them up in India they would have far more work than they could ever find here. I should like to see them beginning with the men who amuse tourists every morning with cruelties to small birds. They may probably be met with there outside any hotel.

Sport and art have called to me about equally in my life, and in Agra both calls were clear, for we saw the Taj Mahal by moonlight, and an old shikari and I met in the street and we arranged for him to take me out after blackbuck. Of the blackbuck I can tell in prose, but this seems hardly sufficient for the Taj Mahal, and so I append here two short impressions of it that I wrote in verse, the first of them at Sikandra on 14th December, looking from Akbar's tomb to the Taj Mahal standing up on the horizon in the evening.

From Dream to Dream

Out of an Emperor's sorrow (for all things done by man
Dwelt once with dreams and fancies) the Taj Mahal began,
And all the gazing thousands pass heedless of the woe
Of Shah Jehan the Emperor, three hundred years ago.

But seen on azure evenings from over Akbar's tomb,
Pale pink on the horizon, across the gathering gloom;
One side a floating shadow, the other side a gleam;
The Taj Mahal at twilight goes home again to dream.

I may explain that the last word of this poem is meant to be a noun and not a verb, which I fear may not be as perfectly clear as everything in a poem ought to be. The other I wrote in Delhi three days later.

Agra

The rosy walls, unguarded, but strong as of old,
Which sheltered dynasties now dust on the air;
The Indian sunsets, lilac and green and gold;
And the little skirl of a pipe from one knows not where;

These things may fade from me if not written soon.
But the sudden gleam in a cloudy night on the dome
Of the Taj Mahal beneath a ray of the moon,
Like a pearl held up for a moment clear of its home

By a dying diver, to sink again in the deep;
And the mosque unseen coming suddenly into sight,
And smiling once and going back to its sleep;
These must remain with me while my eyes have light.

The fort of Agra and the Jasmine Tower are told of in other books; sufficient to say here that it is the kind of place that Hitler would like to bomb. We saw also Fattepur Sikri, the red-sandstone city of Akbar, now housing only leopards.

The wild and the tame live closer together in India than in any other country I know, and the day that I went out with the shikari I found a stalk more likely to be interrupted by men than it ever is either in Scotland or Africa. I knew that in some parts of India peacocks were sacred, though I did not know in which, but by the first peacock I met I saw that they must be sacred there, for he had such an entirely assured air, and I did not shoot. I got two blackbuck that day, with fairly good horns, and came back well contented.

Travelling from Agra I met once more the hospitality of Sir George and Lady Schuster, for he had left the finances of the Soudan to somebody else and was now attending to those of India. They lived in one of the houses that had been built, surrounded by gardens, in New Delhi for the members of the Viceroy's Council, houses whose splendour's only shadow was the habit of the wife of one of these high officers to hang out her washing on the front lawn. There Lady Schuster kindly allowed us to stay for a couple of days on our way through Delhi, although she and Sir George were at that time away. To tell of Delhi I had better employ a historian, and do it in a separate volume, and a jeweller who might tell of the Chunder Chok in another volume. One important difference between the Chunder Chok and Bond Street is that in the former you may meet with a cow lying across the pavement, and since the cows know they are sacred, you have to walk round. Another difference is that Delhi has fallen six times, and Bond Street only once. But that is in old Delhi, in New Delhi I got the impression of two

great architects prowling round a hill by night, each trying to grab it, which shows how wrongly informed a traveller may be. Yet both the Parliament House and the Viceroy's House are designed to stand on a hill, and there is only one hill there: the Parliament House has it, and yet the road to the Viceroy's House rises up with a great sweep as it comes to the gates; but a valley had to be dug for it, out of which it could rise. All through New Delhi runs an artificial river, no doubt multiplying the beauty of the great buildings, but I suppose there is no light without shadow anywhere in the world and no advantage without its attendant disadvantage, and that stagnant river should be the perfect home of which the mosquito sings.

We saw that superb mosque, the Jumma Musjid, and the Earthly Paradise in the palace inside the fort, with its little marble canals along which goldfish used to swim past the throne, wearing little jewelled collars. And they had faith in their earthly paradise, for there is carved on one of the walls in Persian "If there be a paradise on earth, it is this, it is this, it is this."

CHAPTER XXVIII

DISCRETIONS AND INDISCRETIONS

FROM DELHI WE WENT TO RAMPUR, TO STAY AT THE PALACE WITH THE

Nawab, a mile or so outside the capital of the State. My friendships had hitherto been all west of Suez, and the hospitality and the delightful conversation of his late Highness the Nawab of Rampur were an experience that must have seemed as unlikely as being entertained by Haroun el Raschid and listening to Sheharazade. But some of the best stories that I have ever heard were not told to me at once, nor to everybody; the Nawab naturally wanted to know what kind of guest he had got, and the method adopted to find out was, I was afterwards told, tried with every guest at Rampur. Whether this was so or not I cannot say, but the method I can describe, for I remember it very clearly. A new guest was asked to sit beside the Nawab in front of the fireplace and, while the rest of the party sat more or less in a semi-circle, his host asked him questions. The Nawab, being a ruler, was most interested in the details of government: with the laws already passed at Westminster he was familiar, and he knew a good deal about our politics, but what he wished to know was what the cabinet planned to do next, and a great many searching questions he asked me upon this subject on my first night in Rampur. For a few moments I attempted such answers as a superficial view of the situation might suggest: I said that I did not know; that cabinet ministers were sworn to secrecy, and that none of them had given me even a hint. That may appear to have been an easy line to take. But it was not so, and these remarks of mine having been brushed aside as mere preliminary verbiage, the Nawab probed deeper and prepared with a keen enjoyment to be told the intentions of the Government. “Why does So-and-So not marry?” he asked me. “Why does his father not command him to do so? I command *my* sons, and they marry. Do I not?”

And, receiving no contradiction upon this point, he turned back to me to hear what he wished to know. My answer was unsatisfactory, and he helped me out with a suggestion. “Does he not like women?”

“Oh, yes,” I said.

A happy smile came over his Highness's face. "Ah," he said. "Tell me something about that."

"Well," I said, "he does to a certain extent. And then on the other hand... What I really mean is, he doesn't like them too much, or on the other hand too little. But just right."

No doubt I should have found even more to say, while the whole large house-party sat round in dead silence, but the smile of anticipation had faded out of his Highness's face and he said: "You are very discreet." Later I was able to make some slight amends for this outburst of discretion by getting a cabinet minister for him to talk to direct, for the Secretary of State for India, Lord Peel, who was my wife's first cousin, was at that time in India, and we asked the Nawab if he would like us to ask him to come, and we sent him a wire, and he came and stayed at Rampur; but the Nawab was shrewd enough to know that you get no secrets of interest out of a cabinet minister; what he wanted was irresponsible gossip, and in this I had failed him, and his generous old heart never grudged it me. Only once during all the long time I stayed at Rampur did I ever ask him for anything; all the rest of my wishes had been found out before I could have openly stated them. That one request I made later, and I will tell of it in its turn. Sometimes I tried to thank him for his great hospitality, but he met my thanks with a simple text from the Koran, which was: "Three things I love, fasting in the hot weather, fighting with the sword, and entertaining my friends."

How unjust and ungenerous my discretion appears, looking back on it, when I remember the tales with which he delighted me, so few of which were discreet enough for me to set down here. But one or two are along the borderline of discretion and may perhaps now be told again: one told of an Indian State, I never quite knew which, and its Ruler and an English Resident. It should perhaps be borne in mind that an Indian State in those days, whatever it may be now, was ruled by an autocrat with the British Government over him, much as Heaven was over the Czar, duly recognized but scarcely ever interfering internally. Now, this prince was living a bad life, though the Nawab gave me no details, and the Resident was watching him and waiting his opportunity, and the prince knew he was waiting, and the Resident was well aware that the prince knew that much. With things just like this the young Prince walked one day into the Resident's house and said to him: "I have done a foolish thing. Really a very foolish thing indeed.

I have killed a man. I killed him in cold blood. And I come to you, my enemy, as to a gentleman, to ask you to save me."

And then came the touch which, apart from the fact that I should never have doubted the Nawab's word, showed me that the story was literally true. "Then," said the Nawab, "the Englishman ran up and down the room abusing this prince for half an hour."

It may be said that no Englishman ever runs indoors, but that is mere fact, and truth is deeper; and the truth was that the walking up and down of an athletic Englishman, when considerably agitated, appeared to any resident in the tropics as nothing short of running. It is the little vivid truth that to me does so much to make the picture.

In that half-hour the Resident reminded the Prince of all his responsibilities, and very thoroughly reproached him with all his failures. And at the end of the half-hour the Prince had said: "Yes, but what will you do for me?"

"O well," said the Resident, "you won't hear any more about it."

There may be those who will say that that Prince of far away and long ago should have been brought to trial; and if they are right this tale is on the wrong side of the borderline of discretion. But all that could have been said at the trial was said in that half-hour while the Englishman was striding up and down, and no punishment could have curbed those youthful violent ways as that Resident must have been able to control them ever after the half-hour in which he had furiously poured out his heart, and then not failed the man who had trusted him.

On the day when I was being so closely examined on English politics the fancy may have come to me for a moment, when being asked some question which had been long ago settled by the Declaration of Rights, that the Nawab was no very serious politician; but I very soon saw how erroneous that fancy was, as my reader may best understand if he imagines himself being closely questioned by the ghosts of Henry VIII and Queen Elizabeth: for a moment his attention would be misdirected by superficialities, such as that the two ghosts were out-of-date and their opinions pre-Gladstonian, but he would soon be very hard put to it to keep pace with the intellects of these able rulers.

Another story that the Nawab told me was of a prince in modern times who had got himself into trouble with the Raj, and it was from this tale that I got my first glimpse of his Highness's great loyalty to his friends. All the

other Indian rulers were anxious to get this Maharajah out of his difficulties, but they had not been anxious enough, to escape my host's reproaches, who having thought of a perfectly effective way in which to save his friend, was shocked to find that the Princes of India would not co-operate with him. It would have been very simple, and the least that men should do for a friend who might need their help. He explained to me what it was: the Indian princes should have put on all their jewellery, and sat in the dust together outside the Viceroy's door, and refused to eat or drink till their friend had been pardoned.

CHAPTER XXIX

MY FIRST REQUEST

ANOTHER REMARKABLE CHARACTER IN THE STATE OF RAMPUR WAS THE Chief Minister, Sahebzada Sir Abdussamad Khan, to give him a name that I barely remember, for we all called him Macduff. When young he had run away with an earlier Nawab's daughter and had been banished from Rampur for a year, after which he had returned and had run the State ever since. Imagine six foot three inches of tact, and wisdom enough to be relied on by the autocrat whom he served and by all the English guests that came to the palace, and you have the glimmerings of the beginning of a sketch of Macduff, which I will not continue, for I dislike analysing my friends, as a surgeon would refrain from dissecting his. We saw him several times afterwards in London, and once he came to stay with us in Ireland, and when we found that he would like to visit the houses of some of our neighbours we were luckily able to show him in one of them the chair and table at which Queen Victoria signed her coronation oath, and in another the canopy that was carried over her upon that occasion. He laid his hand quite reverently on the arm of the chair. We have not heard from him since these troubled times began, or had from him our usual Christmas card.

One day it came out that I was fond of chess, and so a chess-player was sent for from the neighbouring capital so that I should have a game. He came and we played, and we had not done so long before I saw that I was playing against a master: this much many others have done, but my opponent on this occasion was something more than a chess-master, for, being descended from the Mogul emperors, though without any authority or possessions, he was accorded by everybody the title of Master of the Universe. The Master of the Universe had the first move, and played an opening that I had never seen played before: he moved rapidly and with absolute composure, and it was just the kind of opening that might have made any European believe that in the mysterious East he had met with something with which he could not cope. I have mentioned that chess resembles strategy, and this game resembled a battle begun by a cavalry charge. Such a start to a battle would certainly be surprising; but there are

no openings in the East or elsewhere which can win a game at the outset, providing one sits tight and plays according to commonsense; and I realized, for all his composure and the assured rapidity of his moves, that this extraordinary opening must be unsound. As it will only take ten letters of the alphabet and a few numerals, perhaps those of my readers who may not be chess-players will excuse me for recording the opening for those who are. It was:

1. P-K4. 1. P-K4.
2. B-B4. 2. B-B4.
3. BxPch:

The situation bristled with difficulties, but ignoring the surprise, which had nothing to do with it, I realized that the opening was unsound and, just avoiding the difficulties, waited for it to break down. We had a hard — game, — but — it — is not — easy to — recover from initial — mistakes — at — chess, and, — not — having — been — able to beat me in the first dozen moves — with — his strange opening, he lost the game. It was the turn then for a little wisdom of the West, and I did not ask for another game with him, for I felt that he was a better player than I, and guessed that in the next game he would have discarded his mysterious surprises and with steadier play would have beaten me.

Nobody asked me how the game had gone, because of their tact and kindness, and I did not blazon my victory, so I doubt if they ever knew that I had beaten the Master of the Universe.

The Nawab very kindly invited our son, and he got leave from the North-West frontier and came to Rampur. I had not said much about big-game-hunting before my kind host saw how keen I was on it, and very soon after my son arrived in Rampur we set out in cars to look for heads. The Nawab's third son, Prince Dillon, drove us and did as much for our entertainment and comfort as his father would have done, which is to say as much as Haroun al Raschid would have done for a favoured guest. It was on Christmas Eve and there was to be a banquet that night in the palace, but we started early and only went twenty or thirty miles, so there was plenty of time. We had a long day, and I shot a blackbuck, only the third that I had ever shot in my life, and it was lashed to the running-board of the car and we all turned home towards evening. Older men than Prince Dillon drove the other cars

and they were home before dark, but to Prince Dillon there came the thought to take a short cut. Who has not had such fancies? Very soon we came to a river, and he attempted to ford it. Then came three things all together, which might have been dealt with separately, but the three were too much for us: the sun set, the motor broke down, and a storm came up. With sunset came darkness, with the storm all the roads in that part of India immediately disappeared, that is to say the kutcha roads, which were of sun-dried earth, and which with two or three minutes of heavy rain went back to ordinary mud: we were twenty miles from the end of the pukka road, which ran a few miles out from the capital. Had we had anybody else but Prince Dillon to look after us we could never have got back that night, but in spite of very bad toothache which had swollen one side of his face, he was all energy, and went into sleeping villages in the jungle and woke the inhabitants of one of them up and got some bullocks and a tonga and harnessed them up, and away we cantered with the only outfit that could travel those roads, going very like Father Christmas. Meanwhile in the palace there was the most profound consternation, as I afterwards heard from my wife, and there is probably nothing that could have more deeply moved the Nawab than the thought that through any neglect by any subjects of his anything could have happened to his guests. And nobody's imagination is so weak that when he starts wondering what has happened to somebody he cannot think of adequately dreadful disasters. What the Nawab thought had eaten or otherwise injured us I never knew, but he sent out all his cavalry to look for us, under the command of his eldest son, his present Highness, and a fleet of motors. Then, as the Chief Minister afterwards told me, he went to the Koran and read a text at random, as he often did when in trouble, and I was assured that the text was, "They shall return, though with difficulties." I really think it was a terrible night for him; for us it was perfectly comfortable in the bullock-tonga, and when at last one of the motors met us we slowly continued our journey whenever the car was pointing straight, though in that wide sea of mud it rather often went sideways. And then we came to the pukka road and soon ran into Rampur. On the steps of the palace stood the Nawab with his staff in the early hours of the morning, and a glance at the anxiety in his face gave me some idea of the situation, and realizing at the same time that we were now far into Christmas Day, I said "A Happy Christmas, your Highness." For a moment he could not realize that it was any occasion for happy greetings,

and it seemed to take more than a moment to banish all the forebodings with which he had occupied so many hours, but at last they reluctantly vanished. And now I had to explain how delighted I was to have shot a blackbuck, and what a fine day I had had. But that was not easy: two guests had been lost in the jungle for much of the night, and this dreadful thing had occurred through the fault of his own son. I tried to explain how well Prince Dillon had looked after us all the day, and the enterprise that he had shown during the night. But between the night and the day came that short cut, and the river that broke down the car, and unerringly the Nawab put his finger on the flaw in my argument. But why, he asked, had his son taken that short cut? If I have indicated anything of what hospitality meant to the Nawab of Rampur his feelings towards his son may be understood, and that the kind young prince had a charge to answer of the sort of gravity with which the Constable of the Tower would be faced over here if he had dropped the Crown Jewels into the Thames. We dressed, and a meal was prepared for us, too late for the banquet and too early for breakfast, which the Nawab also attended. It was when this repast had progressed some way that I said to my host: “I have never yet asked anything of your Highness, because everything I could have possibly wanted was given me before I could ask for it. So this is my first request.”

He leaned forward delighted, anxious to hear what he could do for a guest. “What is it?” he said eagerly.

But he looked very grave when I answered.

“Forgive Dillon Sahib,” I said.

Had I asked too much?

He pondered a moment, and then he said Yes.

I think my wife saw with what difficulty he had made me this promise, and saw that it needed clinching, for she suddenly leaned forward and shook hands with him. And so the thing was done.

CHAPTER XXX

TO THE HOLY RIVER

THERE WAS A WIDE LAWN IN FRONT OF THE PALACE OF RAMPUR, SUR rounded by plantations of peaches and mangoes, where once there had been a forest of bamboos much frequented by robbers, but the forest had been cut down, and one huge walking-stick with a silver ferule at one end and a great gold knob at the other, engraved with the crown of Rampur, which the Nawab gave me at Christmas, is a remnant of it, and is in the house in which I now write. Lord Peel, who was given a similar one at the same time, dared me to carry it in London, and I have not yet done so. On the wide lawn bounded by the plantation of fruit-trees and a few ornamental arches of white stone one may sometimes see flocks of pigeons being drilled, which I had never seen till I went to India, or known to be possible. The art comes from the north, whence the Rohillas came, who rule in Rampur, and I often saw it later in Peshawer, looking over the city from a house-top. A man waves a white cloth and the flock of pigeons wheels at his command, and another flock under command of another man may fly right through them; far away to the north-east over the elephant stables one saw the white peaks of the Himalayas.

A gun fired at sunset and dawn throughout Ramadam, so that no Mahomedan should make the mistake of eating at the wrong time. And every now and then through the night a watchman at the edge of the fruit-trees would cry out loudly that he had seen the thief, so that if there happened to be one he should consider himself detected. In the palace a band such as one hears in large London hotels played for us every evening, and it was some while before the Nawab realized how greatly I should have preferred to hear Indian music. For not only have I a real love for Oriental things, which has come to me I know not how, but I am, like most people, fond of travel, and I prefer to travel as the swallow than as the snail, and the more one is surrounded upon one’s travels by the sights and sounds with which one is long familiar, the less room there must be for all the experiences for which one travels. When the Nawab did realize that I cared less for the weeds of England than the orchids of India he sent for his own band, and they came in with the strangest instruments and played music as

strange to us as was the furthest land of our travels. Once it was an old and fierce and loved tune that they played; wilder and wilder it grew, more and more beautiful, and the eyes of the players began to flash. “Enough,” said the Nawab, or some similar word in his language, raising a hand, and the wonderful tune stopped instantly and some climax to which it was moving never came. I could never hear it again. I could never learn the name of it. Many questions I asked of others, and got polite answers, but no information. The Nawab had realized that that fierce national song was making hearts throb with emotions that would not be shared by his guests; a little more and the music might overstep the boundary of hospitality, and neither music nor words could be allowed to do that, so he had raised his hand and said, “Enough.” I wish I could have heard that wonderful tune again and heard it to the end.

I was told that in all India there were few, if any, more learned in Indian music than the Nawab of Rampur. And he had sent for a band for his guests all the way from some English hotel. Whose heart in London is kind enough to provide entertainment with a penny whistle at the Albert Hall, in the intervals of a symphony, for those whose taste is not attuned to Beethoven?

One day the Nawab with Macduff took my wife and me into his bedroom to see some of his jewellery, which was in a safe in that room. A silver bed and a few large gold vases and a bunch of tuberoses were almost the only ornaments of the room, and there we were shown some splendid jewels, of which I only remember now a big gold bracelet for the arm with a few great stones set in it. But chiefly I remember how the Nawab got it, or rather his grandfather, for there is a right way and less satisfactory ways of getting anything, and I got the impression from the quiet contentment on my host’s face as he showed us this armlet that his grandfather’s way was the ideal way. Of course a piece of magnificent jewellery must always give some pleasure to any who may be lucky enough to get it, whether it is a present or whether it is bought in a shop; but the grandfather of the Nawab did not go shopping. “This,” the Nawab said to me, “my grandfather took from the Maharajah of Such-and-such, whom he killed in battle.”

The rest of his jewellery was kept in an iron house, and this was to have been shown us. It was the kind of thing that one has read of in fairy-stories, big bowls full of rubies and much besides, but before the day on which we were to have been shown it, after the big party had gone, the Nawab unfortunately fell ill and the sight of this house is one of the memorable

things that we missed. He took us one day to see his palace in the capital, for Indian rulers often have many palaces. We went after dinner, and, as the Nawab had not been there for a year, only the sentries were alert, and the servants who should have been waiting until he might come were not expecting him at that moment. I think it was a hot-weather palace, for there was a swimming-bath outside his dressing-room door into which he could dive from his door and swim to other parts of the house; and a huge saw of silver lay across every door in order to keep out snakes. In this palace he showed me a fine piece of silver representing Ulysses tied to the mast and sailing past the sirens, which had been presented to his grandfather by some English officers whose lives he had saved during the Mutiny by sheltering them in Rampur. For a moment one did not see what a ship had to do with it, but it was the restraint of Ulysses among the sirens that was being commemorated in silver. Near by there shone in the moonlight the great dome of the mosque, entirely covered with gold.

I soon went out again after big game with Prince Dillon. We motored about twenty miles, and then got on to elephants. One evening we went on elephants into the jungle to a spot at which a tiger had made a kill. We moved in and out among the trees when we could, and where that could not be done the mahout would ask the elephant to uproot a tree. The language in which a mahout speaks to an elephant is the elephants' language, which must mean actually that it is the language of the tribe that first trained elephants, a tribe which no longer appears to exist on the earth, for I do not think any men and women have ever been found who talk among themselves the language that the mahout talks to his elephant, but the lore of this tribe remains, and may be the only lore in use in the world that has never been translated into any known language. The elephants brought us just before nightfall to the place where the tiger had killed, and we climbed a tree with the help of ropes that had already been arranged for us, and Prince Dillon and I waited there for the return of the tiger. He had a large electric torch to shine on the tiger, so as to give me a clear shot. We had not long to wait, when the tiger came whispering through the jungle to eat his kill. No more than a whisper did the great beast make. I was unfamiliar with shooting at night and most unfortunately had an electric torch, which just touched my rifle. Faint though the sound was it was utterly unmistakable, metal being used only by man, of all the creatures that inhabit this planet. The roar of the lion is imitated fairly well by the hippopotamus, and roughly

by the red-deer and even the bull, but the clink of metal means unmistakably man. And so the tiger was off. At pitch-and-toss, when one is backing heads, one must expect tails to turn up quite often, and at least as often in sport one must expect bad luck, either through one's own mistakes, or through the power of the weather or forests or mountains, or any other force of Nature that may oppose one. The Nawab was disappointed, for he knew how much a first tiger would have meant to a guest, and Prince Dillon must have been much disappointed too; but nobody blamed me, whose fault it was.

On another day we went after Barasingh, or Swamp Deer, which is also often called Gond, and I shot one of them. It is difficult to shoot from the back of an elephant, on account of the animal's breathing. The Gond is somewhat like a Highland stag, but a bit larger and lighter in colour, and the points of the horns, with the exception of the brow antlers, do not come forward in the same way; for though one often sees drawings of a red-deer's antlers sprouting in all directions, that is not the way in which they really grow. And I shot a pig on that day. Though this is probably the most desperate character of the jungle one does not feel that one has acquired very much of a trophy when one has shot a pig, because the achievement is outshone by the men who ride him and kill him with lances. Perhaps, on account of the pig-stickers, I should not have shot any pigs at all, had it not been that the Nawab particularly asked me to do so, because they damaged his people's crops, and so I shot them as he asked, but only in unrideable country. The pig usually charges, terrifying the elephants, but that is no test of his prowess, because I have seen them considerably alarmed by a hare. The next day we went out again, and went after panther, and I shot three barasingh, two of them very fine heads; and a lovely black-and-gold panther got up and came past my elephant, and I got him, and he came back to Rampur tied to the running-board of the car, and the Nawab came out on to his white marble steps, on to which somebody inadvisedly carried the blood-stained panther, and looked at it with delight, for he saw his hospitality bearing fine fruit.

And then I went to visit the Maharajah of Benares, staying for a night in his guest-house and calling on him in his palace on the other side of the river. The kind Nawab was always reluctant to allow a guest to go, and when I did go to the beautiful city of Benares he sent a wire to remind me not to stay there too long, and so my visit to Benares was curtailed. Two of

the Maharajah's officers showed me many sights of the city, and even tried to disturb a god from his rest, the famous Jaggernath, or Juggernaut as we call him, but he was not going out that day, and my kind hosts were unable to persuade his priests to open his temple. There is a great bell there that an Englishman had once vowed to the temple of Juggernaut, if his rowers got him safe ashore from a storm that rose on the Ganges; the promise of the bell to their god had probably stimulated the rowers, and they got him safely across and Juggernaut had his bell. And I was shown the monkey temple, where spoiled monkeys snatched food ferociously, and the cow-temple, in which cows and peacocks strolled about, and a priest sat by a bell which worshippers rang when they prayed. Whether Heaven copies Earth, or the other way about, the Emperor Jehangir used to have a precisely similar arrangement, a golden bell that any of his subjects could ring, night or day, and make a petition to him. Those who showed me round would I think have liked to show me what an up-to-date city Benares was, but all my interests were lagging thousands of years behind them. The Maharajah's palace rose sheer from the edge of the water and its steps ran down into it, which made it convenient to land from the launch that he kindly sent for me, but I think that those steps may have met a more serious convenience, for those who hold that the world is balanced on the trident of Mahadeo, who rides an elephant which stands on a tortoise, tell that if you die on the far bank of the Ganges your next life is spent as a donkey. Though the palace was on the wrong side, its doors opened right on to the holy river. Tiger-skins nearly covered the walls of all the rooms that I saw. The beauty of Benares is not a thing that can fade out of one's memory and, if it is possible to convey that beauty at all in words, I might still write much of it, but, as the earlier proofs of an etching are the clearer and thus more valued, it may be fairer to my reader to give a brief description of that bend of the river which wrote at that time in Benares.

BENARES

The sun had set when I came to the holy river. Steps thronged down to the water, steps everywhere: it must have been ages since the sloping banks sufficed for the feet of so many pilgrims. Temples clustered there: for all I

knew, that bend of river was sacreder than the rest; but I knew nothing, I was merely gazing. In a tiny temple beside me a bull was kneeling in stone, before a black altar holding a circle of marigolds. Beyond that I could see no farther into the darkness. The temple had a legend too, that a man told me, and all round that one legend its history was dark to me, like the gloom of the temple round that circle of flowers. Beside it another temple lifted higher. It stood on a terrace and its door was shut. I climbed by steps to the terrace, and there saw sitting upon the stone and gazing away up the Ganges a man with a face like that of someone I knew, an old friend in England, one who might well in another life, if he travelled like Browning's Waring, be content to sit and contemplate that river. Yet on his face was a most clear expression that I have never seen on the face of the friend that he seemed to resemble. I have seen, though not often, an expression on a man's face that said: "I have found salvation and you haven't." But never before had I seen, deep below that, as I saw it now, the expression of one that was enjoying salvation actually at that moment. One has read of such an expression upon the face of martyrs, at the stake, at the last breath, but I had not before seen it. He sat there gazing westwards up that bend of the Ganges, and multitudes of pigeons sailed home to the temple roof and nestled among the little ruddy domes. Eastwards a haze was over all the river; one began to notice the light of a burning-ghat. The water a dull pale-green lay calm as a great jewel beneath. A large boat rowing swiftly past, going away from the sunset, showed by its speed which way the river ran, there being no ripple to show. From heights of architecture the light faded away, only the West glowed still; and now the light of the fires of death became vivid and full of colour. A new moon stood like a horn above the tops of the temples; and the earth-light made a silver ring all round, and lit the whole orb; all we can ever see of Earth's magnificent glow, its faint reflection upon rare nights from the sunless face of the moon. It brightened, and the fires of death on the river's bank grew brighter. The pilgrim sitting on the stone gazed blissfully up the river, seeing something I could not see, for his eyes were now shut. Below the steps a drum throbbed like a pulse, and a priest was chanting; behind him two or three men were singing softly, and a congregation was gathered, before him, silent and motionless.

A star came out; and gongs and bells began to sound at the very edge of the water, to summon men to worship the holy river. Little lights began to glow all round from tiny fires. The sound of the gongs increased and the

bells rang more rapidly. Now there broke out from yet another temple a burst of music from drums and from pipes of reed. Someone opened, I never knew why, the door of the temple beside me. The curious note of the pipes grew louder and weirder. The night was throbbing and ringing with drums and bells. The holy river floating by seemed motionless as a beryl. Each flame of the fires of death by the river's bank was vivid. The pilgrim beside me, in the ecstasy of his discovery, smiled on and on and on.

CHAPTER XXXI

IN TENTS LET MY DWELLING BE

IT WAS PLEASANT TO STAY IN THE PALACE OF RAMPUR WITH A BIG PARTY, and balls and banquets, and even more enjoyable, when the party had shrunk, to hear the Nawab's tales, telling at one moment of some old argument with an astute Viceroy who probably had seldom before met his equal, and at another of a genie of enormous size with a face as big as a chair who had met his grandfather and also been bested; but, whether or not I have yet given this impression to my reader, the Nawab had seen my sympathy with that line of Lawrence Hope,

In tents let my dwelling be.

And so he ordered his youngest son to collect the elephants, and to string out his police along twenty miles of road to protect me either from imaginary dangers, or from real ones of which I knew nothing, and soon Prince Dillon and I started off in a car nearer to the Himalayas, and met the elephants and went into camp. We went by a road that we had travelled before, and I could not help commenting on its improvement. "Yes," said Prince Dillon, "I put six hundred men on it."

After that I may perhaps describe a big-game-hunter's camp, for the surprise of those who have not hunted big game, and the perhaps even greater astonishment of all who have. First of all there were the elephant-lines, and on the opposite side of the camp there was a large number of horses, and at one end of the camp there was a long row of shops and at the other end were my tent and Prince Dillon's tent, and not far from these was the mess-tent with an avenue of some sort of tree that had been grubbed up and replanted, and a triumphal arch at the end of the avenue near my tent, with the crown of Rampur in gilded paper above it and the word Welcome in bright pink and blue paper on the laurel wreaths of the arch. All this in a complete wilderness of sere grass, inhabited by leopards and jackals and white ants. One night a storm laid flat the triumphal arch, but fourteen years have done nothing to beat from my memory the very kind thought that inspired it.

The greatest luxury I had ever known in a tent was a double fly, but here I had six thicknesses between me and the sun or the cold. Outside my tent a sentry with fixed bayonet marched up and down by night, and I was shocked to realize that where so much was done for me I was beginning to wish that the sentry would not always halt at each end of his beat, but would turn about on the march, for the click of his heels as he halted was not inducive to sleep; but soon he, also, grew sleepy, and all was well.

A letter I wrote to my wife from that camp gives a slight sketch of it. This was on 13th January, when we had been there a little more than a week. "*A blank day yesterday. To-day I got a pig. And a thunderstorm got us. The roads just wilt immediately, when they merely hear thunder. In the morning we got hunted by a fire. A fast elephant was sent up to me to change on to, which I did, not quite understanding, and we cleared out of the reeds and came to a forest. There, however, the fire hunted us again, and again the fast elephant was sent to me to change on to. This time* I *asked if we were running from the fire, and the shikari said Yes; so I refused to change, because I would be leaving the shikari and the mahout to be burnt if they were too slow. However the fire didn't get us.*

"8.30 a m. 14*th Jan.*

"*These are wonderful tents. We had a night of rain, thunder and wind, and chokidars hammering, and the tents all stand and there's not a leak in mine. What journalists call 'conditions' still continue. Our triumphal arch is a perfectly bare skeleton, crowned by two crowns of Rampur, and bits of its gaudiness give a faint colour to the mud. The poor chokidars still warm themselves by hammering occasional pegs.*

"*Not a flag is left of all our gaudy bunting. A man awfully like — is directing the heaping of earth outside my tent, to combat the return of the original marsh.*

"*The reason our tents all held is that they use tent-pegs of hard, unsplintering wood, as thick as a tent-pole and nearly a yard long.*

"*An army of red ants moving in a west-easterly direction attacked our camp in three columns, and were defeated with 'Persian oil.' Somebody discovered a harmless snake. These are our innocent pleasures.*"

Later I wrote of that time to my wife who wrote of an earthquake felt in Delhi, "*whether or not we had an earthquake here during the thunderstorm on* 13*th Jan. I don't know as I was on an elephant.*"

I shot many gond from that camp, shooting from the back of an elephant. What we usually did was to start off on elephants and then perhaps come to a road and go some way in a car, and then pick up more elephants and go further afield. What we saw most of was these big stags that are called barasingh or gond, and a good many mouse-deer ran in and out of the reeds, but from the back of an elephant I was not able to shoot one of these small swift creatures. Often we went after tigers, but the difficulty of shooting these in long grass will be guessed when I say that I remember standing up in a howdah on the back of an elephant and noticing that the flowering tops of the grasses were above my head. Somehow there is far more to tell of when one fails to get any animal that one is after than when one shoots it. When you are in front of a large animal, and press the trigger, often the whole episode is over, but the chase when it is not so ended can be as fascinating as some of those pursuits to which men devote a life-time: many a realized ambition goes the same way, the way of a snowflake caught in a warm hand. Part of a letter that I wrote from our camp to my wife, who had now gone to Delhi, gives some idea of one of our days: "*We worked very hard for a panther two days ago. They beat a copse in which he was, with elephants: it was no bigger than a Meath fox-covert. I was posted on an elephant, at a corner to which they were beating it. It looked like a cert. I thought I'd get a steadier shot, and that it would be more sporting, if I came down; so I did, and I waited nearly an hour, for the covert was thick. In the end he never came. Then they found a big hole, an earth in the covert, and planned to dig him out, by digging down to a connecting hole and prodding him out with a pole, through the big one. I was to sit on an elephant while they dug. This seemed too unsporting and I said I wouldn't be up in a howdah while they dug at a panther, so I came down and sat over the hole for another hour or so. Being within one foot of an annoyed panther has its drawbacks, on the other hand shooting along the one-foot range should be fairly accurate. The hole turned out to run too deep, and so the day wore away, blank but for a chinkara in the morning, which was no good: it was galloping hard and I could not choose the head except by guessing, and I guessed wrong. Also a quail.*

"*Yesterday I was called at* 7 *and dined at* 10. *Also a blank day but for a beautiful peacock, at a hundred yards with my*.275, *and a jungle cock, which to my astonishment the*.275 *blew to pieces. We went to a beautiful*

forest under the Himalayas, and I happened to notice on the way back along a great dry river-bed that it was the same river along which that friend of all our governesses skated away from those wolves. I recognized the woods along the curves of the left barde. But we were after bigger game than wolves, and repeatedly saw the tracks of tigers. In fact I had to tell them I didn't want to be shewn any more, as there was too much delay and excitement over each track.

"*Then I studied astronomy for a while from the back of a pad-elephant. Then a car, I beside the driver, with my rifle. We saw the lights of a tiger's eyes. I saw them and said nothing, but when we got nearer and they saw them from the back of the car they began of course to comment. From then on the driver was terrified, or he tried to think: he went slower and slower, and stopped fifty yards short of the tiger. We could have slid on another thirty yards while the tiger was wondering.... The tiger, or he may have been an overgrown panther, stepped into the grass at the edge of the road: he was probably not four yards away, but there was nothing more to be done in the dark. Soon afterwards the driver wrecked the car, and* '*Dillon*' *drove me home in another. I missed a small panther later on; sheer annoyance I think.*

"*You'll be glad to hear that the whole of the East, from here to Suez, agrees with everything I said about the chauffeur.*"

I leave in the exaggeration of the last sentence, even though it does not seem funny to me now, because, when quoting from a letter written at the time, I do not wish to patch it up, or to try to make it what is called literary: rough as it is, it is thirteen years or so nearer to that camp than I am now. The dots where I left out a few words replace a needless expression of my annoyance with the driver: I do not think now that he was frightened by the tiger, or whatever the animal was; I think that he was only choosing a suitable range at which I might shoot, instead of leaving it to me. Of course for shooting in the dark the right range is a few feet, and forty or fifty yards is absurd. As I said in my letter; we might have got close up to him while he was wondering, if we had not wasted time in the way we did. We often saw the eyes of panthers and other wild animals on the road at night, shining in the light of our lamps; and the panther that I shot, and which was set up for me in the town of Rampur, now looks from a wall of the house in which I write, with glass eyes of that same green tinge, pale as the very palest

emerald. The eyes of all the other animals whose heads I have had stuffed in more sophisticated shops are of the right colour, but the taxidermist in Rampur must have given it eyes of the colour that he had seen himself by night on the roads. Had it not been for the wind-screen of the car I think it might have been easy to shoot some of these animals, but as it was it was very difficult; one had to stand up and rest the rifle on the top of the windscreen and lean back to steady oneself against the back of the seat, and shooting in this way I never got one.

We used to get back to camp late at night and then have supper with a fine appetite for it, eating dishes that I wish I could eat again. Sometimes all the jackals would howl, and that meant that there was a panther going by, but I never saw him. One day to my astonishment I saw a stone well-head right in the middle of the camp; as we appeared to be in the very heart of the wilds I asked Prince Dillon what it was, and he told me that once a village stood there, a village called Naroi, but panthers, pig and malaria had stamped it out. Distant fires every night marked the sites of other villages, that were burning the grass to keep the panthers away. [SIRENS FIRST TEXT]

One night a tiger went past our camp, howling every hundred yards or so. I forget what light there was, but there must have been some for I took my rifle and went out to look for him, but I never saw anything. Prince Dillon must have been somewhere else, as he would otherwise have come with me, or dissuaded me from the rather useless attempt. But I particularly remember one of the men from the camp following me all the way, although unarmed. I wrote a sonnet to that tiger while I was in Naroi camp, beginning

Oh mighty voice that in the night went by,
And with the wild waste communed as it went.

I called it *To A Tiger Passing My Tent.* I got five barasingh, one pig, one sambhur and a chinkara from this camp and several birds of different kinds, but no tiger. Their voice, their tracks and their eyes in the night were all that came my way. One day I wrote from there to my wife: "*We have our little moments of excitement. Yesterday while looking for the tiger, something large swept through the long grass. I fired at the moving grass as there was no chance of ever seeing the animal, and it stopped. When within five yards of it it occurred to me that my*.350 *was hardly the rifle for a wounded tiger,*

so I reached for the.470, *and as I was changing there was a sudden rush, and excitement among the elephants, and out charged a female sambhur.*"

I was often urged to shoot birds, so as to make the bag as big as possible; but in the excitement of going after tigers birds lost all their interest for me, and I thought it very inadvisable to make any noise at all shooting birds when there was any rumour of a tiger near; but I sometimes regret now that I never took some easy shots that I might have had at the Great Snipe, for I have never shot one of these birds in my life. I got several black partridges, peacocks, jungle-cocks, quail, hares and florican, which is a kind of lesser bustard and is considered a great delicacy. Sometimes in England I tell people that I have shot partridges and seen them retrieved by an animal other than a dog, and ask them to guess what animal in ten guesses. The answer is an elephant. All the birds that I shot were picked up by the elephant and handed to the mahout, if handed is the right word. After we had been in Naroi camp a little over a fortnight we left the wilds, where Prince Dillon had been a most perfect host, and returned to the palace. There the Nawab asked me about my plans, and I said that I must go on to Delhi next day. "But why?" said my kindly host.

"Because if I stay any longer," I said, "I shall have stayed with your Highness a month."

"A month!" said the Nawab. "What is a month? My great grandfather went to stay with another prince for a few' days, and he was asked to stay longer, and he stayed for ten years. But you go after a month!"

I have heard that that Nawab of Rampur not only stayed ten years in the other State, but died and was buried there, and that his servants remained too, and their descendants live there still, and there guard his tomb.

CHAPTER XXXII

THE HIMALAYAS

IN DELHI I STAYED AGAIN WITH SIR GEORGE AND LADY SCHUSTER, WHERE my wife had already gone. Penelope Chetwode, then unmarried, the daughter of the Commander-in-Chief, was something of an expert on the sights of India and took me to see the Kutab Minar, whose tower we climbed, and the pillar of rustless iron erected there long before rustless iron was invented, and going down, as I was told, into the body of a serpent asleep in the deeps of the world. She also took me to see some of the neighbours, but not the best people. In fact it would be to ignore their most ancient traditions to call them anything but the worst people, for they were a criminal tribe that haunted the ruins of Tughlakabad. Actually we only saw one of them clearly, who followed us all the way with a little axe, evidently as an escort. Later I remember Penelope Chetwode and our niece Mary Pakenham at our house in Kent, as they-chanced to come on some marigolds, staging an impromptu worship of an Indian goddess, Mary playing the goddess, and Penelope chanting such Indian words as she knew, and dancing and flinging marigolds.

From Delhi we went North to see our son in his own surroundings, which are the Guides Cavalry and their home-town, Mardan. The jungle, as one travels through India, often comes quite close to the train, and indeed one may meet it in many places in India close to a way of life that differs from its way, but not apparently with any animosity, not quite as in England the countryman looks at the increasing town as something that is desecrating his fields, or as the townsman sometimes contemptuously looks at “undeveloped” countryside. Night fell, and in the morning we went over the great Attock bridge and passed through country whose dry ravines are said to provide convenient homes for bandits. We came to Peshawer, set in its wonderful circle of mountains. Nowhere else in the world have I ever seen such a mighty bowl, although I have been reminded of it at Ankara. Peshawer lying just inside the two great gateways through which India and all its tribes may be approached from the rest of Asia, the Malakand and the Khyber, has in its streets the people of more races than I had ever seen in one city before. Many of the best carpets in the world go through one of

those passes, and Afghan quilts of exquisite needlework, and such coats to wear in cold weather as are impossible under our system of monogamy, for it would take four wives to embroider a poshteen with silk as it is embroidered. There I bought a magnificent coat for a little under £4; it was made of the untanned skin of a brown shaggy sheep, with the hair on the inside, and the roughness of the skin is made up for by copious and brilliant needlework in orange silk, and the collar is of black lamb's wool. I have it still and it sometimes causes alarm to horses and even men; but sometimes I meet an old general at a shoot, and he seems suddenly to remember his youth and says, "Why, you have got a poshteen." On the way home I wore it, walking along the decks, and nobody noticed it any more than they would have noticed a grey flannel jacket; but when we turned the corner and came to Port Said and met the people who had come for the winter to Egypt they looked at it in consternation. But the poshteen is not the wonder of Peshawer; every officer in the Guides has one, and they put their sentries into it at night; the wonder of those parts, and indeed of all India, is the polo-ground of green grass at Mardan. They have gardens there too round their bungalows, and in their mess many of the most ancient Bhuddist carvings in the world. And on a hill not far away I was shown a ruined monastery in which there were many more of these ancient figures, carved, they said, by the Greeks. They say that Alexander came through the Malakand, but that his baggage went round by the Khyber. And there is a man living near the Malakand who is said to claim that it was one of his family who showed Alexander the way through the pass. If we can imagine contentment greater than what we are accustomed to, it is easy to believe that a family has stayed in one home for over two thousand years, and there is no difficulty in believing that the family memory handed the story down, though no doubt the man that first told the story considerably exaggerated his usefulness to Alexander. Our son took us in a car to Landi Kotal up the Khyber, where everybody carries a military rifle and it is not considered sporting to shoot a man while he is on the road, but all the farmhouses are battlemented and loopholed for good reason.

General McLeod, then a colonel, commanding the Guides Cavalry, and Mrs. McLeod very kindly put up my wife, and Major and Mrs. Hankin put up me.

Once I told a lady in London that there was a hundred-years war going on along the North West frontier, and she looked surprised, but when I

mentioned it to my son he said that actually the war began on the death of the Prophet. It is an interesting country, in which the principal crop is rifles, and these are gathered in various ways, both by day and by night. There is some humour in that long war, one of its jokes may be a wedding procession coming into Peshawer at night which turns out to be an armed force of Afridis, or a trumpeter in the uniform of the Guides may ride through the town blowing the Cease Fire on a bugle, and he may turn out to be an Afridi too; and these jokes, which may amuse some people, are chestnuts to the Guides and they have learned to respond quickly to new ones. War there too is something of a family affair, for the Guides are recruited from families along both sides of the border.

Of the various junk that a traveller collects, one never knows what piece may be of use or interest to somebody when he has brought it home; and it is the same with travellers' tales. And my wife reminds me now of the tale of how to catch a hyena, and thinks that it may possibly be useful; and so I will record the story, as my son told it me, of how the Pathan catches a hyena in the hills that look southwards upon Mardan, guarding India, and northwards upon lands that nobody guards. He goes, my son told me, to a cave in which the hyena is known to be, and spreads a net across it, saying all the while that he does so: "There is no hyena here. There is no hyena." A good deal probably depends on the tone of voice in which this is said, for the point of the story is that the hyena believes the Pathan, and thinks he is really not there, when the Pathan says so. The language in which the Pathan speaks is pushtu, the language with which the hyena would be supposed to be quite familiar. And when the net is quite ready the Pathan shouts out: "There *is* a hyena!" The hyena, now realizing for the first time that he is really there, rushes out and is caught in the net.

From Mardan we returned to Delhi to stay with the Viceroy. Lord Halifax, then Lord Irwin, was at that time in New Delhi in the magnificent house designed by Sir Edward Lutyens. This house was then so new that a ball which Lord and Lady Halifax gave while we were there was, I believe, the first there had been there. One of my impressions of the Viceroy's House is of a long passage leading to the drawing-room, and as one walked along it in the evening one would pass the sweep of a large archway through which the sunset was shining, and then another and another, so that sunset after sunset would flash into view like great pictures. And another thing I remember was walking about at night, while the ball was going on,

looking at various rooms, and suddenly seeing stars over one's head: the bold fancy of that open space amongst the stone was very imposing at that time of year, whatever it may have been in the monsoon. But what perhaps struck me most was that in this new and occidental house a lizard had already made his home and settled down quite comfortably in a cornice of my dressing-room, while in the balcony of it white ants were already marching. It seemed to me, as I looked at the lizard, that the East had already accepted this house. I remember a very comfortable sitting-room that we had, and a rather wide marble waste between my wife's bedroom and her bathroom, and I remember an echo in the Durbar Hall so noticeable that I should think they must have had it done away with by now. But mostly I remember the kind hospitality of Lord and Lady Halifax, of whom I will write no more, for to write of Lord Halifax is to touch upon the historian's work and, though there is no trade union among writers, and no brick is dropped on one's head, as would be the case if a bricklayer were to attempt to be a mason, yet historians do not like it if a mere worker in dreams is found to be interfering with their tomes.

In one of the evenings there, when much of the party was sitting down to bridge and other games were being found for others, I rather apologetically mentioned that I only played chess, but found to my surprise that even a chess-player could be accommodated, and an A.D.C. kindly offered me a game. His opening looked a good one, but it was irregular, that is to say not in the books, and was one that the wisdom of the ages had rightly rejected. With this handicap he lost the game, but, being rather surprised at the loss, he suggested another, and then another after that, and, although an extremely busy man, he tried several times. So we went on playing, though the games were obviously a great strain on such leisure as he could find. I saw that his lost games needed some explanation, but I did not tell him until we left Delhi, when he saw us off at the station, and when I was already in the train, that I had once had a draw with Capablanca. If he didn't believe me the mystery remains unexplained. And yet no more explanation was needed than that he was very much occupied with a great many other things.

Back in Rampur we received a very kind welcome, but the Nawab's health was not what it had been, and a sparkle had gone out of his tales. "I am very old," he said to me.

Yet, if he was no longer quite up to the other two things that he loved, he entertained his friends as well as ever.

One day he took us into a small room with an astrologer and set the astrologer to work to prophesy glorious things for me, which of course the astrologer did, for I think I have mentioned that my kind host was an autocrat, though he did not quite prophesy for me a place on the glittering pinnacles which the Nawab had evidently wished him to prophesy for me, but still he did well enough.

And on another day we saw the famous library of Rampur, a treasury of ancient books that cannot be catalogued here. I saw the flowery Persian writing, and many pictures ornamenting pages on which painters and writers had used their utmost skill. And I saw the war-diary of Babur, the conqueror of India and founder of the dynasty of Moguls, written in his own hand.

I went out with Prince Dillon again and shot a brown-coloured animal of the cat tribe that was in size about half-way between a domestic cat and a panther, but was not too large for the elephant on which I was riding to lift up and give to the mahout, though the poor brute hated doing so, because elephants don't like blood; but the mahout insisted. Two days later I shot another pig, and a few days after that I shot two more pig and another kind of jungle-cat and a day or two after that I got another peacock. We passed by little shrines of the Hindus and saw many birds of gorgeous colours and were always in scenery that was touched by the majesty of the Himalayas. When first I saw these mountains I had seen them from the train, without ever knowing that I was near them, so that I did not at once know even what they were, but I felt as though I had suddenly met some mighty and friendly spirit, and the meeting inspired a poem which I wrote when I first arrived in Rampur. Now we were seeing these same mountains closer, and, as prose cannot quite tell of them, I quote another poem that I wrote of them at about this time.

The Himalayas Seen From Rampur State

Like a long shadow on the sky,
Cast by a planet wandering near

Lured by some spell of wizardry,
The Himalayan peaks appear.
Or tinted with a rarer glow
Than sunset gives to other clay,
Lilac above and blue below,
They guard the very last of day,
As though they were some garden wall
Built by a titan against night,
With rainbows planted there and all
The rays and tints and gleams of light.
While, gold with evening and dawn,
Like an enchanted palace set
By magic on an inner lawn,
Over their rampart shines Tibet.

CHAPTER XXXIII

TYGER, TYGER, BURNING BRIGHT

ONE DAY THE NAWAB EXACTED FROM ME A PROMISE TO RETURN TO INDIA and stay with him again, and suggested my leaving my rifles with him. When I thanked him for the great camp he had given me with hundreds of men in it, he said: "That is nothing. You shall have a thousand men when you come next time." As I said, his hospitality was that of Haroun al Raschid.

Then we said farewell, and went on to Gwalior, whither the Nawab had sent a kind letter ahead of us. An account of Gwalior would make another book, indeed there must be many books about it already. There was a large party at the palace, in which I remember the finest chandelier that I have ever seen. I indeed seemed far from the wilds in such surroundings, but my thoughts were a few miles away in the jungle, for next day I was to go after a tiger. I heard a great deal about how tigers are shot, but I had my own ideas and kept my counsel. Next morning the Maharanee sent my wife ten silver bowls, each filled with a little cream that had been left out all night in the dew and whipped up with it in the dawn. I set out by car along one of Gwalior's splendid roads, accompanied by Major M. P. Dube, A.D.C. to the young Maharajah, and a fine old sportsman, Captain Sultan Hassan Khan. When we came to the valley of Bhimwara we got on an elephant, and so proceeded to a stone tower. To an upper storey of this stone tower I was taken and given a seat in a wide window which commanded three well-cut rides in the valley below us. It was a narrow little valley full of jungle, and the whole length of the central ride which completely crossed it was no more than the range of a shot-gun. A great number of beaters, commanded by a man on an elephant, were to drive the tiger past us. For a while I sat as I was told, looking out of the window and hearing stories of how one sportsman in that very room had tried to load his rifle by putting his hand into the next man's pocket, and finding some cartridges there, but not of the right size. So excitement could evidently come as high as that upper storey, but not to me; and, thinking it might be more sporting if tiger and man were on the same level, I went downstairs unhindered, because they did not know

where I was going. Downstairs there were a lot of men, and the door was barricaded with beams. I asked some of them to open it, which they did, and I went outside. I walked round to the central ride, and stood in that. Of course I could not now see the other two rides, but one was enough. When they realized in the tower what I was doing there was great agitation, for the feeling of hospitality is so great in the Indian States that the possibility of anything untoward happening to a guest fills them with extreme horror. They urged me to come back, saying that the Maharanee would be very angry with them, and they called out to me: "You will be killed, and Gwalior will get a bad name."

It certainly felt a little lonely in the ride outside the tower, and perhaps these and other of their discouragements were beginning to make me wonder if a double.475 would be quite enough. So I called to my bearer, Feisul Din, who was in the tower, to bring me my shotgun, which I have always thought, though I have never had the experience, to be a handy weapon at a range of one yard when other things have failed. Feisul Din brought the shotgun and I put it on the ground beside me. And then they began to shout in the tower, "He is coming. He is coming."

I think he was only a few yards away and that the noise of their shouting diverted him, for he crossed the ride about forty yards away from me, whereas they had indicated at first that he was exactly opposite. One thing astonished me as I saw my first tiger, and that was that he was so like a tiger. I remember my surprise clearly still. I had been accustomed to see zebras, fairly close in bright sunlight, look as though their hides were of unstriped chocolate, and Barbary sheep as though they were mere sunlight shining on bare rock, and rabbits like patches of mud, and spotted panthers looking jet black; in fact everything in nature appears to a hunter delusive, and yet here was a tiger looking just like a tiger, as a public man of whom one has seen many cartoons may surprise one by looking exactly like himself. I had put up a walking-stick at a tiger in the Zoo, wondering if I would draw as steady a bead on him when I met him, and here was a tiger looking exactly like the one in the Zoo, and my rifle coming up like that walking-stick. And here the story ends. For when you press the trigger, and are lucky, it is all over; if you are unlucky there is a lot more to think about and to say. But this tiger was dead.

The A.D.C. and Captain Sultan Hassan Khan were wrong about the wrath of the Maharanee: when I saw her she merely smiled. I had a bit of a

shock when I turned round after shooting the tiger and found that Feisul Din was standing behind me unarmed, instead of having gone back to the tower. Later I tried to explain to him how sorry I was that he had taken this risk. But the moment I spoke to him he broke out into a torrent of description of the shooting of the tiger which, though he spoke very good English, did not appear to be able to be told of in this language, and so he told of it with immense exaggeration, as I could see, in some other language, and all I could understand from it was that he had evidently enjoyed standing there.

I met the Senior Maharanee that evening, curtained off in a corner of the room, where she sat at a table, with a little screen on the table rather like a ping-pong net, which prevented one seeing her face. A dreadful thing happened while I spoke to her; a corner of the light screen fell from the stick that supported it, so that I saw her face. How should one deal with such an accident? To the Maharanee it was easy, but to me it had come as a surprise, and I did not know quite how much shock I ought to show at having seen what until then had been so carefully screened and curtailed. The corner of the ping-pong net was soon replaced and we went on with our conversation, and I had only seen the Maharanee for as long as I had seen the Taj Mahal when the moon had shone for an instant through a chink among many clouds.

On the next day I was taken to a lovely place called Susera, where I remember a station of a little railway, a station which must be beyond the dreams of anyone who has only seen the stations on our railways, unless they can dream very hard. Its walls, instead of glaring with tradesmen's intense rivalries, were all covered with flowers. It was not more beautiful than anything to be seen in England, but it is at Kew that you would have to search for its equal, and not along our railways. At Susera I was taken after blackbuck, and, having by now shot three in other parts of India, I was able to choose a good head. Once during a stalk, when some women in their lovely cerise dresses came very close, the officer who accompanied me warned me that they were there, though most of the time he attended to the more serious business of warning me of the presence of distant cows, whenever there was any possible risk that a long shot might accidentally reach them. His skill must have been as great as his kindness, for he enabled me to have no less than four stalks, and I got four good heads. On the following day I was taken to a stretch of water to shoot a crocodile, which I did, but neglecting to put a few more bullets into him after he appeared

quite dead, he slid away into the water. On the way back I got another blackbuck. The day after that I was taken after bears, and saw one on a small mountain above me, and got a shot, but, shooting from an elephant, I missed him. Later that day in jungle on the same mountain I got a sambhur. On the day after that I was taken to a lovely jungle called Gurriah Deo, where I spent a long day and with the help of beaters got a fine sambhur and a blue bull, or nilghai. I had one other day after tigers, when we sat in seats on the top of a cliff above the edge of a jungle from which the tiger was to be beaten. I again attempted to go down, but this time I was stopped by the simple method of taking my rifle as I climbed out. And after that I was given no more tiger-shooting This day was one of those alternate days at sport, an unlucky one; for though a tiger had been located in that jungle, another tiger had come overnight and fought and killed him and left. The jungle was beaten to the last peacock but no tiger came out, and they took the battered skin of the killed tiger and returned with this sorry trophy.

My wife saw a good deal of both Maharanees. She had known the Senior Maharanee when she went to India with her parents in 1900, and now she used to go to tea with her, and sometimes her Highness sang English songs that her English governess had once taught her, while my wife accompanied her on the piano, and sometimes a dancing-girl came in, with bangles and bells on her ankles, which irritated the Maharanee's little dog.

One day we were taken on an elephant to see the great fort of Gwalior and its temples, a journey that should have been described at the time, but my thoughts were divided between these glorious things and the jungle, and were far from foreseeing these glances over my shoulder that I am making now in the effort to show, to such as may care to look, a glimpse here and there of the path that lies behind me, and through few fairer places than Gwalior.

A few days later we left the magnificent palace and went to Bombay, where we were met by an agent of the Nawab of Rampur, wearing the shiny hat of a Parsee, and he gave us the Nawab's parting present, a basket of Bombay mangoes then just ripening, one of the finest fruits in the world. There I sent a telegram to my friend Major Douglas Straight to say "*Shot a fine hearthrug*," for I did not forget that it was to him that I owed it.

In the train on the way to Bombay, stimulated by India, I had started a long story, or what seems long to me, called "The Electric King", and I continued it for three days on the ship; it told of an American seeking the

magic of the East and clinging very tenaciously to the lore of the West, so that contrast was there in abundance. I think it is my best story. It was the S.S. *Viceroy of India* that brought us home, and the Red Sea, that can be so terrible, was almost cool.

We had a Limerick competition on board, and I was asked to give the first line, with which they all had to start, and I gave them for their line: "There was a young thing in a ship." Of course I did not compete, being in the position of starter, but soon I began to wonder how I would go on from my own line, and from that I wondered how the great poets would have done it, and one or two of the more modern ones, and even Euclid. So I jotted down a few, and proposed to read them after the competition. My wife was uneasy about it, thinking it might be a failure; but I chanced it. These were my light lines.

"*There was a young thing in a ship.*"
As they might have done it, if they had been on board

Milton

There was a young thing in a ship
Foredoomed since the Fall to the trip;
Not the fall of the leaves
But that error of Eve's,
That mortal, deplorable slip.

Edgar Allan Poe

There was a young thing in a ship
With a lecherous look on her lip;
And a sinister star Looking on from afar
Sent a curse on the whole of the trip,
Put a doom on that elegant ship.

Wordsworth

There was a young thing in a ship
Who, afraid of the harsh winter's nip,
Some more underclothes wore
Than she had done before.
None taught her this wild scholarship.

Browning

There was a young thing in a ship;
Mark the curve of her ankle and lip,
And her labels on boxes
And skins of strange foxes.
There's a tale for who follows the tip.

W. B. Yeats

There was a young thing in a ship
Who had seven pale smiles on her lip,
That were once seven drakes
On some magical lakes
Where the wild beer makes musical drip.

Swinburne

There was a young thing in a ship
Where the sea was afoam to the lip
Of the languorous land
At the north wind's command,
And the gods were inert in its grip.

Euclid

There was a young thing in a ship
Whose lip, with each angle or tip,
To another's was equal,
As was proved in the sequel,
By imposing his lip on her lip.

Omm Khayam

There was a young thing in a ship
Who said let us carouse, let us sip
The red wine of the sun;
For the night comes when none
Shall carry a cup to a lip.

Tennyson

There was a young thing in a ship
A mere rose-bud, a delicate slip,
So artless she knew
Not the wheel from the screw,
So simple she did nought but skip.

Walt Whitman

There was a young thing in a ship
Who knew perfectly well what she was after;
For I am not fettered by metre or rhyme, camaradoes,
I am the strong white American man

And am bound by none of the shackles of moribund civilizations.

The last of them, coming on top of all those limericks, did what on land is called bringing the house down. At sea should one say it sank the ship? —

I wrote another story in that ship, and passing Egypt my thoughts returned to the story that I had intended to write about Princess Sitamon and I wrote it shortly afterwards, as well as a story about Aden and one or two others. And so we returned to England, where the sirens still slept, and were to sleep for ten more years; and perhaps others slept too, dreaming of peace, and in fitful moments of wakefulness hoped that a scheme, too clever for any of our predecessors in all human history, would keep the seas of the world as placid as Lake Geneva.

And then one day I got a long telegram from the Nawab of Rampur to tell me that he was ill; and soon after that he died. When I think how much of the East his generous hospitality opened to me, I cannot do better than close this account of my wandering through twelve years with the poem that I wrote then to the memory of a brief but delightful friendship.

On the Death of a Muhammedan Friend
May you go safe, my friend, across that dizzy way
No wider than a hair, by which your people go
From Earth to Paradise; may you go safe to-day,
With stars and space above, and time and stars below.

And at the further end may you not fail to reach
All that you hoped to find upon the other shore,
Where the long centuries go curving up the beach
And foam away and cease, and there is time no more.

And if, from some small door behind our Heaven, should stray
A weedy path, from which the orthodox refrain,
Round to your Paradise, I'll seek it out one day,
And sit and hear you tell rare Indian tales again.

THE END

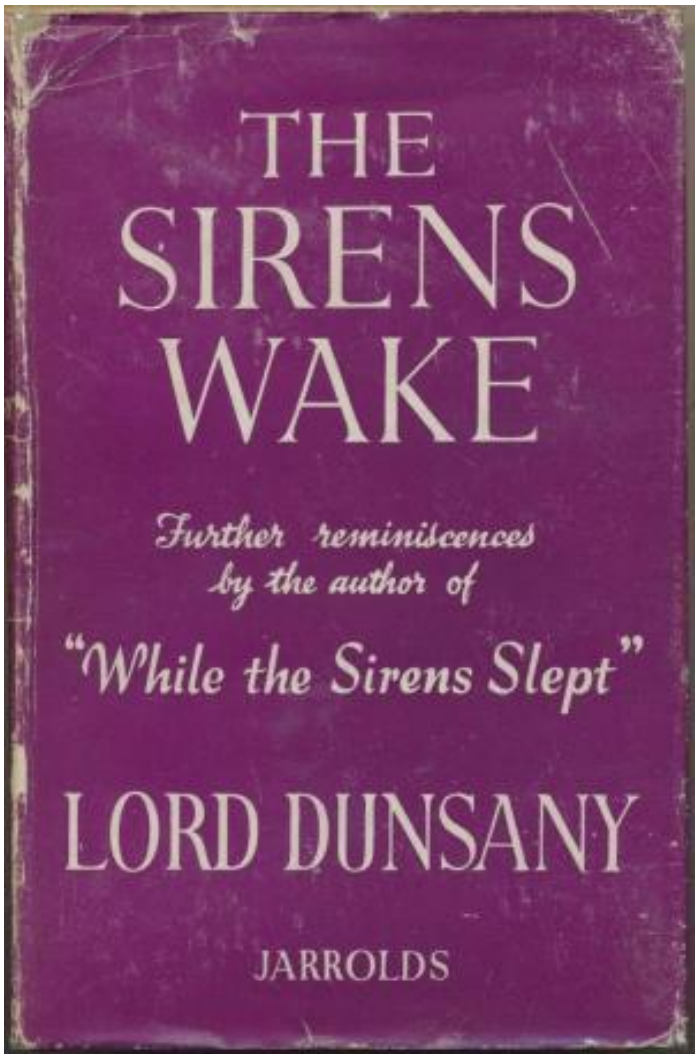
THE SIRENS WAKE



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The first edition

CHAPTER I

BACK TO EUROPE WITH JORKENS

"Tell on," said the King of China.

The Arabian Nights. The 28*th Night.*

GARRULITY like any other failing may, I am afraid, become a habit, and now for the third time I am talking about myself. There is not much harm in this for the reader, for he need not open the book, but I am conscious that it is not quite the occupation for a writer. I have used the simile before: a writer's life is what nuggets are to a goldsmith; he uses them to make brooches and whatever his craft can, but he does not sell them raw. And so an autobiography is like a sale in a goldsmith's shop, when all the lumber is turned out of the back rooms, nuggets and graving-tools and old furniture, all sold, whatever may be found in the dark of the rooms where the public does not go. The auctioneer will make no such apology as I am making now; he will say that the lumber at the back of the shop, and all the raw material unworked by the goldsmith's craft, is very fine stuff indeed; but I am conscious that such experience as one may have gathered, worked according to the rules of one or other of the arts, is the proper stuff for an artist to offer the public, rather than the raw experiences that I am able to rake here and there from the dark of past years; quiet years most of them, years so quiet and dreamy that it almost seems as if the whole of Civilization slept, while all that preys on Civilization, whenever it takes so little care, crept nearer and nearer. And then came years more easy to be remembered, because they are close to the time in which I write, and because it will be long before the world can forget them; years in Tennyson's words, of

Clanging fights and flaming towns and sinking ships and praying hands.

Not that I noticed any praying hands, though like most of us I saw something of the rest of that line.

My wife and I came back from India, where we had visited our son on the North West frontier, in March 1930: I had with me a certain number of heads and skins of things I had shot, and an imagination that must have been enriched by new and strange scenes, sinking slowly down into memory, and that was stimulated by the beauty of them. And so, between late February and early April I wrote about half of the book I called *The Travel Tales of Mr. Joseph Jorkens,* the final half, and Messrs. Putnam's published it that year. Only the other day a young man asked me who was the original of Jorkens. He was entirely imaginary, a man with sufficient flaws in his character to mitigate or cancel the pomposity that I felt must attach to writing of one's travels in the first person, whatever *I* may be doing now. But, imaginary though he was, I saw him very clearly and described him in a few words to Mr. Huntington, the head of the London branch of Messrs. Putnam's, who wanted an illustration for their catalogue, which Mr. Stampa was asked to do, and I was astonished that from so brief a description there could have been made so striking a likeness as Mr. Stampa's portrait showed. I was delighted with another portrait of Mr. Jorkens that was done by S. H. Sime; but that was of Jorkens in Africa when he was younger, whereas Mr. Stampa painted him in later years in his club over his borrowed whiskey. I also wrote some poems that summer, and we stayed at places where we had often stayed before: at one of them, Helperby, while out partridge-shooting I wrote a poem short enough to quote:

THE HOPE I had a hope one day
Shooting a stubbly field
With autumn on its way
Bright over wold and weald:

I hoped my life was worth
More than the bird that fell
And of more use to Earth.
But, there's no way to tell.

Looking at it hurriedly, and from our own point of view, we are obviously much more useful than partridges, but anyone finding the time to look at the last line carefully, and of course impartially, will, I am afraid,

find there is no answer to it. The useful things we do are useful to men; and the partridge, with perhaps an equally narrow view, might consider only things that were useful to partridges; but what would a strictly impartial view discover? It might discover no good that either of us did, and might find so much harm that our engines did to the world, that the partridge might win on points. On such lines as these I had already written a short story, and in January 1933 I made a radio play out of it, which has several times been done by the B.B.C. My reader may find an inconsistency in me when he reads these and similar views upon one page of this book, and stories of sport on another. He will not be the first to find that; and this makes it neither truer nor less true. But of course I am inconsistent. And, when you consider the power of the pulls of heredity and environment upon all of us, like the sun and the moon pulling different ways at the tides, we must all be as inconsistent as the sea. Some of us are brought up to sport from very early years, some come of sporting families. But how old are those families? For how long have our forebears hunted animals, in various ways, for their food? They were certainly at it in the ice age, when the polar ice came as far south as Paris; and that was a long time ago. When a glimpse from a more philosophical outlook suggests to us that man and all his machinery may not be all that we hope, that glimpse gives a momentary knowledge that may not be able to hold its own against the might of those instincts upon whose strength man's existence depended for ages and ages.

I went again to the lovely hills of Kildalton and shot two stags there, in between shooting parties at the delightful places in Yorkshire to which we went so often, Arden and Helperby, and in November we went to Terling for a pheasant-shoot with Lord Rayleigh. It occurred to me that October that the public were interested in gruesome stories of murder rather than in the kind of tale that I wrote, and I wondered if I could write a tale sufficiently gruesome to interest them. So I tried, and on October 20th and 21st in Cadogan Square I wrote a tale of murder called "The Two Bottles Of Relish." I seem to have succeeded, for my literary agent was unable to get any man in England or America to touch it. But eventually one woman did. It was about the horrible murder of a girl by a man a little like the late Mr. Patrick Mahon, and it was accepted by *Time and Tide,* whose politics are feminist, and I sometimes wonder if the lady who runs it said, "That is just the way that men do treat women," and published it perhaps as a bit of straight realism. Gradually any nausea that editors may at first have

experienced on reading this story seems to have worn off, for it has made several other appearances since. Later when the Granville Barkers were staying with us at Dunstall, our house in Kent, I read this tale to them. The mystery of a murder has of course to be concealed as carefully as the key-move of a chess problem, or the solution of any other puzzle, but I remember him discovering this mystery from the very first hint of a clue as read it. My son was equally quick when I showed him this tale, but I have never seen anyone get it quicker than Mr. Granville Barker, and I remember his chortles over the grim problem.

We had known the Granville Barkers for some years, but I shall always remember my first meeting with Mrs. Granville Barker. It was in a London hotel, and I was talking a good deal and she had very little to say: my topic was a kakotopia, a land to which all effeminate men and male-minded women should be banished, to form a society and government of their own, and I suggested St. Helena; only then did Mrs. Granville Barker make a suggestion, and it so completely capped my invention, explained at much length, that I remember her words to this day. "As a matter of fact," she said, "they all live at Capri."

One other example I remember of a capped conversation, of a theme, begun by myself, triumphantly completed by another. It was at Arden, though I do not remember in what year, and rightly or wrongly I had been accusing Lady Agnes Savile of an attempt on my life, on account of something that she was doing with a motor when I came round the corner in another car, and she had said, "But I didn't expect to meet a motor round that corner." And I had said rather solemnly, what I still think to be quite good advice, "Agnes, always expect to see an elephant round every corner."

And another member of the house-party said, "Oh, yes. I did meet an elephant round the corner of the road the other day." And the point that I had tried to make by what I thought was exaggeration fell like a soaring bird that at the top of its highest flight bumps against the under side of a barrage balloon. But very different were the two minds that brought a fancy of mine to earth, the one on a Yorkshire road and the other at Capri.

In three more days of October I wrote two one-act plays; the better of the two was called *Mr. Sliggens' Hour,* and the idea of it is that old source of many fancies, a deal with the Devil, but the progress of almost the entire play is from one definite point to another: the first of these points is where a roomful of people are in tears at the eloquence of a young clergyman, a gift

which he has from the Devil; and the second point is where the same people are all laughing at those same words, and their derision is the price, already agreed on, which the young man has to pay for being allowed to move a congregation to tears. The dialogue slopes the whole way gently down without any sudden step, from tearful praise to derision. There is nothing new in the idea of a deal with the Devil, and I have often urged that to judge a play by dialogue is like judging a house by its bricks, but, though I did not write the play for the sake of the dialogue, it amused me to see the dialogue go from the one point to the other, moving as polite conversation moves, without any disagreements or sudden digressions, so that the miraculous intervention of the Devil takes place quite naturally before the eyes of the audience.

I wrote several more tales in London that year, and two of them were for a second collection of Jorkens tales. I am very conscious as I write in the autumn of 1943 in a world still yearning for the downfall of Hitler, that an account of my tales or plays must be among the trifles for which none can have leisure. But I think that by the time that what I now write is published he will have vanished like Browning's scirrocco "in black from the skies," and for all I know there may be a few with an evening to spare for light reading who may care to glance at the origins of some of my tales that may have chanced to come their way. And there will be peaceful evenings in long years of peace: of this I am fairly certain. For, though I cannot share the hope that by being a little more clever than man has ever been before, since he started to leave his records on stone or papyrus, we can prevent any more war; and though I believe that war is one of the conditions under which man exists on this planet; yet there are tides in human bloodshed as there are tides in the sea, the one running all through history as the other all through geology, and we have a high tide now: our children will see the ebb-tide. There will be work to be done; so much that it may well keep readers away from this book of mine, but I hope that this time the work will be done and the recreation taken, whether or not it includes light reading, without that sense of a doom hanging over a generation, darkening year by year, which we had before.

CHAPTER II

POODLE-STORIES

IN December we came to Ireland and I settled down to what have been the principal occupations of my life, shooting snipe, woodcock and ducks, and hunting foxes. Nobody can build with dreams who has not his feet on reality, and though the material of art is dreams, the work of fitting them into their places is very real. No artist therefore should have anything artificial in his life, and if shooting and hunting had been mere frivolities I hope they would not have attracted me. I do not mean that I took to shooting with any lofty purpose; it merely came my way but I have gone on with it realizing that it is a part of life, and somewhat closer to the four great winds and sunset and dawn and the seasons than many amusements are. If one ever shot a sea-gull one would stultify one's whole occupation, for it is the quest for food, and a sea-gull is inedible; and if one ever shot a bird sitting it would cease to be sport. But, so long as one follows the ordinary rules of a sportsman, one is acquiring food either for oneself or one's friends and enjoying a good sport. Foxhunting is so grand a sport that it seems not to need justification; and yet I think everything should be based upon a purpose. The purpose of foxhunting is defensive rather than offensive: it is the protection of poultry. If a foxhunter for a moment may be unaware of this, let him consider the impalpable difference that there is between foxhunting and hunting the carted stag. Both give a fine run, and yet the difference is unmistakably there, and the difference is made by the purpose. But if any foxhunter should be unaware of that purpose, it is quite certain that no Master will be, or any member of a Hunt Committee, for they are all well enough aware of the claims upon the fowl-fund and, even when the fullest allowance has been made for imagination, the fact remains that the ravages of a fox are enormous in every district. To others I would say that the organization of foxhunting for the defence of poultry is so old that it is almost out-of-date, but its antiquity has given it a strong hold upon us. Would they bring the defence of poultry up to date? It would be very simple. It would do away with foxhounds. But also with foxes.

When the shooting season and hunting season were over we returned to London, and from the end of April to the middle of June I did six more

Jorkens stories, some of my favourites. One of them was called "One August In the Red Sea," which was mainly about the Red Sea's frightful heat; but I had not imagined a fortnight spent there at midsummer, which time with its strange devices was yet to show me.

A month in London, a month at the centre of the Empire, should surely give one material for a whole book; but writing an autobiography is like clutching at bright autumn leaves, floating by on a strong wind; it is not impossible to clutch a gold leaf here and there, but most of them sweep by ungathered by anyone: so Time whirls past the days at which one clutches with memory. I spent many hours at the Beefsteak, which as I mentioned in a previous volume would alone be enough for the purposes of this book; but, though we have good wine there which we may enjoy in the Club, we are not allowed to take any bottles away in our pockets, and we have a similar rule about talk and good tales. Once a rumour went round that a member of the Club was using conversation he heard there for articles in the Press. I do not take this rumour from the Beefsteak, where I heard no foundation for it, but from the Press, for it was published in the *Sunday Express* and the world has already had a million copies of it. The late Lord Kenmare was the member, far better known as Castlerosse, and when the rumour got to his ears he turned on us with crushing effect: he wrote that he had heard this rumour, that he had never had printed in that paper any tale he had heard in any of his clubs, because no tale he had ever heard in them was good enough for his column in the *Sunday Express*, with one exception, a very good tale which he proceeded to tell. "And what is more," he went on, "if I should ever hear another tale worth printing in any of my clubs, I shall certainly have it printed."

There did not seem to be much for us to say.

Only this autumn, the autumn of 1943, in which I write, with the world's fate not yet decided, we heard of his death, and the days seem darker for the loss of one of the brightest spirits that I have known. More recently still Sir Reginald Hall has died, another old member of the Beefsteak Club. There is a hill in Yorkshire a few miles from a house at which I have often stayed, where a high valley makes a gap in the sky-line; and an uncle of the family that lived in that house told them when they were young that the gap had been bitten out of the hill by the poodle, which they all believed till a day when they picnicked in that valley. Sir Reginald Hall used to make me think of that uncle; thus he played with the Germans all through the last war, and

thus they believed him; and when half way through the war they found out, like the children in that valley, that he was regaling them with his imagination, then he told them the truth instead, and the war was over before they found out that he was not still telling them poodle-stories.

And this childishness of the Germans reminds me of curious discoveries that have rarely come my way, that is to say a clear piece of information in a book, that was unknown to the writer of it. Such discoveries are always amusing, and are like a jewel found accidentally while breaking a piece of common rock. One of the brightest of those was a book by Steinhauer, the Kaiser's Master Spy. It told how the Master Spy got into a train at Euston with flies in his hat to go to Scapa Flow. He evidently had a strong German accent, but that he explained by saying that he was Dutch; and the flies in his hat of course proved that he was going to Scapa Flow for the fishing. As the train started, a man jumped into the carriage, wearing flies in his hat also. He asked the Kaiser's Master Spy what he was going to do. "Fishing," he said. So his new-found friend offered to take him round when they got to Scapa Flow, and show him the best fishing. For, by one of those happy chances that you find in a bad play, he was going there too. A thin plot for fiction, but good enough for the Kaiser's Master Spy. So away they went together and fished amongst the Grand Fleet, and whenever they were arrested the other man with flies in his hat explained that everything was all right. All this innocent and beautiful story is to be found in the book whose name I forget, that was written by Steinhauer, the Kaiser's Master Spy, and published in England some time between the two wars.

And another of these little hidden jewels I have found shone from the pages of a book by von Rintelin, who tells how, while doing a bit of sabotage in New York during the last war, he met Admiral Sir Guy Gaunt, and explained to him that he was an officer of the Royal Navy by telling him a few tales that were popular at that time with naval officers. Having proved his bona fides in this way, he then gave Sir Guy Gaunt some bits of advice about naval strategy, and in particular he advised him to send all his ships away to the other side of America, where they would be very useful, which the admiral at once agreed to do. And in spite of all this, the submarine for which von Rintelin was waiting was sunk, but without at all dimming his faith in the innocence of the admiral.

Deceit seems rather easily deceived, for I read in another book, an autobiography of a detective, how the author went sleuthing in the East

End, disguised as a pedlar of old iron and pushing a barrow with a kettle or two on it; and he met a real pedlar of iron, who insisted on giving him a few engines and rollers, so that he had to push a heavy barrow all day, but there is no tribute in that book to this bit of cockney humour, or any hint that the real pedlar had not taken him for as genuine a colleague as the admiral had seemed to take the spy.

CHAPTER III

THE THREE EXITS

I WROTE a Jorkens tale in August in Ireland and one, in September, in a train, on the Way from another very pleasant visit at Arden to Kildalton for the stalking, and I wrote very little more that year. I was painting a good many portraits about this time, and I may have diverted my output, though I had done more than a third of my second book of Jorkens travels in this year. I think it was in this year that I noticed a flaw in our civilization: I had tea on a train at 5 o'clock somewhere near Carlisle, and the milk was sour. Somewhere or other I have commented on this before, but one cannot point out a flaw too often; that is what one goes to a dentist for and asks him to look round. Here I was in a train, in one of the very arteries of our commerce: this train was transport, modern transport, without which our commercial system would wither away. And it could not get fresh milk. Why? It passed fifty stations and a thousand farms, but nobody had thought of making any arrangement with any of them; the working out of an arrangement would not have taken ten minutes if he had. And so it had to get its milk from London, which gets it from the milk-train, which had not arrived, or been unpacked, when my train left London in the morning; and so my train had to be loaded with yesterday's milk, which was the day before yesterday's in the country it came from, which for all I know may have been somewhere near Carlisle. The train probably did fifty miles an hour, but the lagging thought that made this arrangement was unable to get fresh milk for it.

I had some more grouse-shooting on the lovely hills of Islay, and had two days stalking there and got two stags, a ten-pointer and an eleven-pointer. I quote a letter from the *Field* of October 10th, 1931, which was sent to it by my host.

SNIPE SHOOTING WITH A RIFLE

Sir, — This is a remarkable piece of shooting I saw recently.

I took my guest, Lord Dunsany, out for an hour before dinner, and he took a.250 rifle to pot a rabbit or two. This was the eventual bag: one woodcock, one snipe (shot on the wing), two blackcock and two rabbits.

Yours truly,

Harry Clifton.

But I should add that in the middle of September snipe have usually not got the swift flight with which we are familiar in the winter and this particular snipe gave me a very close shot, and one unusually easy for a snipe. The blackcock took a certain amount of stalking.

As my son was home on leave my wife had stayed in London with him and I wrote to her there. An excerpt from that letter may give a faint glimpse of a stalk, but a very faint glimpse, for there is no mention in it of the mosses and flowers and ferns which one sees so minutely as one crawls slowly over their lovely wild gardens, nor any mention of the heights of Jura looking down on the lovely scene. "I went out today to look for a big stag. We spotted a herd with a royal in it and got up close, but there were so many that some of them soon saw us. Then the stalker changed his mind and said 'Shoot the big ten-pointer.' This certainly was a finer head than the royal, but I only had a second to get a bead on him and then a second to make sure he was the right one, and then they moved off. I still thought I'd get a shot as he moved, but others got in the way and they were gone without a shot. In half an hour we got up with them again, but this time they were off before we could spot him. In an hour from then we came up again, and at 2 o'clock I got him; this time a second before they were gone. He turned out to be an eleven-pointer, a lovely head, wide, thick and dark, and a very heavy stag."

After dinner we all went to the deer-larder to see the head, and it was a good one. How clearly I remember deer-larders in the Highlands. They probably have their counterparts elsewhere, for most things have, though I do not know what they are. But perhaps on days when banks are very full, a manager and some of his friends go at evening down to the vaults and have a look at the heaps of gold lying in dim light, such as there always is in a highland deer-larder.

From Kildalton I went South to one of those parties that are always pleasant at Helperby, and we shot partridges for three days. And then I went

over to Ireland and shot snipe again, sometimes alone, sometimes with my son, and at shoots of my neighbours, and we both of us went to Dromana again to shoot woodcock in an old forest. And one day I wrote a poem, too long to print again here, called "A Remembrance of Pan," which seemed to be a turning back to something forgotten, a sudden yearning for the things of poetry, as though I had been long neglecting them. I had not been particularly idle that year, but what I had written had been mostly Jorkens stories, and I had been painting also, and doing a good deal of shooting. Soon I wrote some more Jorkens stories, but not many more poems. One of the poems that I did write which I called "On a Cold Evening" shows me that my old periodical yearning to travel came to me still; but perhaps I was growing heavier and was less easily to be moved, for the body on this occasion did not follow the spirit and it was long before I travelled again, on a journey to which I was brought by strange chances. This is the poem I speak of, a call from the spirit to travel which was not answered.

ON A COLD EVENING.

As I took the homeward road
One star was in the sky
And a moon all golden glowed
In the chilly space near by,
And a frost was setting forth
To grip the grass and the loam,
For the wind was sheer from the North.
It was good to be nearing home;
It was good to be coming soon
To chairs and a merry fire,
Good, but at sight of the moon
There awoke an old desire.

And I wished for a tent once more
Where, right from the tent-pegs, gleams
The Sahara's sea-less shore
As far as an Arab dreams.

I shot over a hundred golden plover that year and a few hundred snipe and a good many woodcock and other things, and did a little foxhunting. A mixed bag is a necessity if one is going to eat for dinner every night of the winter something that one has shot, as we do when we are in Ireland, and this I am fortunately able to do there. In Cadogan Square in the spring I wrote some more stories, and in Kent that summer I wrote an article called "The Prevention of Tides" which was printed in the *Spectator*. When once a writer has been led into the error of writing about himself, all he can do is to make his story as clear as possible; and I take it that any glimpse of my philosophy must gratify the curiosity of a reader more than a photograph of me in my smartest clothes; and so I reprint that article here, and I do not know of anything that has happened in the last twelve ominous years that should alter the views I held in the summer of 1932. This is the article, from the *Spectator* of February 10th, 1933.

THE PREVENTION OF TIDES

We have no record that when Newton discovered the law of gravity he incurred any hostility from angry folk saying: Now we shall have everything falling on our heads, apples and everything else. So I hope my theory will cause no annoyance either. The proof of the theory I leave to some mathematician with an interest in history, feeling that it can easily be proved by someone familiar with figures. My theory is briefly an application of a commonplace of hydraulics to human bloodshed. It stands to reason that if children making a dam across a trickling gutter wish still to hold back the water they must soon build their dam right across the road; nor can this hold it back for long; and, if the flow of that trickle is by any means still to be stopped, a dam must be built eventually across the whole valley. It will then be a long time before any water goes that way. Yet the effort to hold it back must fail ultimately, and, when the dam does break, this is obvious, that the number of drops of water that will go by must be exactly the number of drops that would have gone by in any case, from the time that the trickle was first stopped.

I believe some mathematician can easily prove by statistics that the same law must apply exactly to human bloodshed. For, when you have small communities quietly raiding each other every other year, there obviously cannot be that security and co-operation that can allow the growth of the organization that makes large armies possible. But prohibit a hamlet from raiding a Hundred, and you get an orderliness that results in the growth of heptarchies. Join up your heptarchies into kingdoms, and you still have wars; and, though people prayed against them, nobody seemed to suppose they were going to stop for ever. It is not till great empires are formed, imposing peace over wide areas of the earth, that the delusion is fostered that peace may now be everlasting. Had warfare between Prussia, Bavaria and Austria broken out again in every generation, the quiet growth of the force that made the World War would have been impossible. Great wars, then, are made alone by peace; and little wars are as bad as great wars, because there are far more of them, and because, as my mathematician will one day prove, the little and the great kill exactly as many. There are two things to consider about this: Why is it so? And how could it be prevented? A large number of the best minds in the world is presumably dealing with the second point, so that we may leave that point now, except to say that they seem to be fastening too much hope upon disarmament.

All disarmament can do is to stop certain large firms of war-manufacturers from having an interest in war; which probably does not go for very much. Disarmament cannot prevent men from fighting, even if you took away the deadliest of all ingredients for battle, the railway train. The most destructive weapon of warfare is not the Big Bertha, but the flint axe. Great guns tend to keep armies apart, killing perhaps a quarter of them, but where men fought with flint axes they must have at once met hand to hand, and more than half must have been killed, including the whole of one side. But while others are discussing how to stop war, let us consider why it is that, for so long as we have been upon this planet, this weed, or flower, whichever it be, has hitherto grown alongside of us. Well, whatever ailments individuals may die of, there are but three exits from this world for peoples: War, Famine and Plague. Without these exits the world would be overcrowded, and anyone who can realize that space on a raft is limited must be able, with a greater imaginative effort, to realize that so is the space on a planet. But to say that without these exits the world would be overcrowded is unnecessary, for they themselves make overcrowding

impossible. The growth of people beyond a certain limit must necessarily lead to starvation, or to devastation by whatever fevers haunt insanitary areas, or to the determination of a strong man not to let his people starve, whatever may happen to others; and this means war; or to the same strong man leading his people away from crowded dirty spaces, elsewhere; and this means invasion. I believe that Nature is benevolent, and chooses the best of these bad exits for us.

I do not know that I can define Nature, but I mean those impulses in the deeps of our minds, dimmer than reason and yet more powerful, that sway us in the end, and the similar forces in beasts and in blades of grass. These in the end lead us to take the wiser course. War at the present moment is not the wiser course, the world for the present having had sufficient of it. You may see this by the attitude of all nations, when one by one their legations were shelled by the Japanese or Chinese. The attitude of every ambassador over that was: "These gunners are all young men; they don't mean any harm by it." But in times when there is a need for war it is sufficient cause for it for an ambassador to slip on a piece of orange-peel; and, though imputing no assault to anyone, his countrymen will say in such times as those: "But what right had the dirty foreigners to leave the orange-peel lying about?" That is quite sufficient to cause war when war is needed, though shelling legations will not do so when it is not. For war comes from tides in human affairs, and depends little on human precautions. Shall we stop it by keeping the birth-rate down to the level of the death-rate, thus preventing its logical cause? I think not, for that is only to invite invasion. War has been hitherto the method whereby the blood of peoples was blended, always with a strong tincture of adventure, and whereby races were made. It has been the method whereby those races held their own so long as they were worthy to hold it, and whereby they were overthrown before they cumbered the earth and lowered the average human standard. I like it less than Newton liked being hit on the head by an apple, but I recognize it as one of the conditions under which we live on the planet. To those who, hoping for peace, are yet prepared to face facts I would point out the sinister circumstance that the first syllable of Avon is practically the same as the second syllable of Punjab, and that that syllable means river. It is worth more than a moment's thought to consider who brought that word ab or av, meaning river, from India to Warwickshire, and how he got there. Nor was he probably by any means floated upon the first of such tides, that swept out of the highlands of

Asia riding after the sun. Yet let us hope that the court of King Canute, now sitting by the shores of Geneva, will stop these tides for ever.

So I thought that war could not be avoided, and I hoped that nobody would be angrier about my theory than they were about Newton's; but I do think that defeat can be avoided, though only with great difficulty, as we have seen, if our leaders and the electorate that chose them concentrate too hopefully on the theory that there will never be any war at all.

CHAPTER IV

A GEOGRAPHICAL SECRET

THAT summer, 1932, in Kent I received a letter from America asking me if I would take a share in versifying the psalms. I did as I was requested and versified six of the psalms, without ever thinking for an instant that it would be possible to improve them, or supposing, when I had finished, that I had succeeded in doing so. One or two little improvements were made by an editor and an occasional syllable added, so that even if I had thought that I could improve the psalms there could have been no room for my presumption after that.

I shot partridges, as I did every year, with my friend Sir Roger Gregory, and we went to Arden again, and this year it occurred to me to have a bit of practice with my deer-stalking rifle, which you cannot do everywhere, except at a target, and shooting at a target is of less use to a sportsman than any other shooting, because, of all the things that any man ever shot at, a target alone stands up out of the landscape and looks what it is; all else that men shoot at is part of the landscape, and has carefully to be distinguished from it before one can know exactly what it is and what part of it one is aiming at. But the hills of Arden are as well suited to rifle-shooting as any deer-forest, and I took my.275 and stalked rabbits along their bare tops. It was excellent practice, only my hostess's cook wondered a little wistfully what she could make of the shattered rabbits. She had more than this to put up with, for Lady Mexborough very kindly allowed me to use the kitchen fire for some clay figures that I was making. This is a craft that I had followed for a few years, and my work at it I have sometimes described to my friends as being of the pre-Tang school, because I am ignorant of a very great many things that were known to those early potters who worked under the dynasty of Tang. I had found out once, on picking up some clay with which a sculptor was working, that figures came rather readily to my hand, and, having made a few, I dried them in an oven, but did not risk them in the fire. When I did put some into a fire they of course cracked, or even blew to pieces, but I gradually learned how to prevent this, and all I know about it now is the following: first of all the figures must be well dried, and for this purpose I leave them for about three days among the hot plates over

the kitchen fire. Then I put them in the oven after the fire has been let out. This is better than asking the maid who lights the fire to put them there in the morning before she lights it; because she may forget and remember later and put them in the oven after the fire is lit, and they will then blow to pieces, In an oven they can gradually become so hot that they may be put from there right into the fire, at any rate near the top of it, and later they can be lowered into the middle of it where the heat makes it a light yellow. Later I improved this method by packing them among cinders in a biscuit-tin and putting that into the oven, and afterwards putting the whole biscuit-tin into the fire. Heat then came gradually, as the cinders became red-hot. They never cracked when done in this way, but sometimes they would be spoiled by getting wrapped up in a piece of melting tin. Accident has sometimes given me a perfect glaze, which has rather surprised potters: it must have come from something in the coal. The safety of the images is much increased by driving holes into them from underneath, and even through their nostrils and ears, with a needle. Any drop of water that there may be inside them then shoots out harmlessly when it turns to steam, along the track of the needle, like a blank fired from a gun, instead of going off like a Mills bomb. I used to leave them an hour in the kitchen fire, and of course they required cooling off in much the same way that they were warmed up, or rather in the reverse order. And that is all I know about making pottery. I am told that plates baked in furnaces, everything in fact from which we drink our tea, have been in the fire for twenty-four hours, but the hour in the kitchen fire makes mine quite permanent. Not so much with any idea of improving them, but rather to bring out the features so that the onlooker can see at a glance what I have seen, I paint these figures. Of course the correct way to paint them is to do it before putting them into the fire, so that the colour is burned into them, but I can tell the reader nothing about this, because I am ignorant of the paints used for this purpose and I merely paint them afterwards, though knowing that this is not the correct way. The figures I do are usually three or four inches high, often only from the waist upwards, and are in no cases either portraits or caricatures of anyone I have ever seen, but are rather portraits of types, and not even those are types that exist, so much as those I have imagined. Perhaps they are rather characters than types, and each character is dressed as such a character should be. I made several rather gorgeous uniforms in the armies of the old Austrian empire and at its court, though they actually were not,

and uniforms that I thought might be appropriate to certain officials who never really existed, in republics that I felt should have been in Central America, had there ever been room for them on the map. As I emphasized their features with paint, so I helped to bring out their character with a line of prose, and each one had his description. Here for instance is a description of one in an admiral's uniform, except that it was green, whose complexion indicated the tropics: "Even at 50 he could throw a knife that seldom missed the heart." And a far suaver gentleman, in a uniform that to my mind seemed suggestive of Germany, was described in the following line: "He had a perfect sense of the moment at which to declare war."

Once there was an accident in the kitchen fire, which I tried to mitigate in the line of description, which went: "Had he only had ears there are no heights to which he would not have risen."

Another gorgeous fellow, whose figure was a little too elongated, had this description: "Thanks to his long neck, so greatly admired by the Empress, he rose to command the artillery of the police and to wear the cloak of St. Pavlov." This, I repeat, was no caricature of anyone who ever existed; but might not such a man have appeared in the history of Europe if only he had been born in time?

And a somewhat similar character, who had also been damaged in the kitchen fire, was described thus: "Till he lost a moustache on the fatal field of Liebenau, he had been the acknowledged favorite of the Empress."

And I had a little revolutionary study called, "Judge condemning a man suspected of belonging to the Middle Class," which was bought at my first exhibition by Mr. Alfred Bossom, the architect, from whom I have heard tales as thrilling as those that the first Lord Cowdray told me, in particular one of how he built a skyscraper on the mud of the Mississippi, but that is his own story. It is a curious thing how often one question has been asked me by many different people, when I have shown them these figures. For a moment they are surprised, as indeed I was myself when first I found how quickly the various expressions seemed to come out of the clay, and then they ask me the question whose answer is to account for it all, "*Where* do you get the clay?" But my answer is always unsatisfactory, for I pick the clay up anywhere, if there happens to be any where I am, and there is clay in a good many places: if there is not, I buy it.

Never having meditated writing about myself, until I ventured upon a book called *Patches of Sunlight* and the habit grew on me, I have few

means of recalling such things from the past as cannot be found in my memory. A hunting diary, a shooting diary, a record of dates on which I wrote anything, and a few old letters, are my only sources. I found today one or two letters that I had written to my wife on a brief visit to London, while she was in Ireland, and in one of them I found a record of an experience I had forgotten, though I have had others like it. It was an astounding experience, and if anyone finds it incredible I can only say that, not only did it happen, but that the kind of mind from which such things come is unhappily growing common. I will tell the episode first, and try to account for it after. As I no longer remember it, I will quote the exact words from my letter, written from the Garrick Club in April 1932. "The following masterpiece of urban suspicion before I forget it. I, at the Brompton P.O., thinking that Government House, Auckland N.Z. was the Governor General's correct address, but wishing to be accurate — Could you tell me if the N.Z. Government House is at Auckland?

"*The Miss.* Why?

I have to reply to a telegram from the Governor General, but I received it indirectly, from Mr. Thomas through the Dominions Office.

"*She.* I'll ask the supervisor.

"*She.* Could you show us your letter from the Dominions Office?

"I. I haven't it on me. But *any way Auckland is the capital of New Zealand, isn't it?*

"*She. The Dominions Office would be able to tell you that.*

"But I believe the secret is already out at the R.G.S. Or are they equally discreet when suspected persons enquire of this important position?"

My uncertainty about the capital of New Zealand is about as far as ignorance can go: they could not have been more ignorant than that, especially after the discussion with the supervisor, and the woman must have supposed that it was dangerous to give away valuable information, such as the name of the capital of New Zealand, to anybody except someone officially qualified to receive such important information. I imagine that Antichrist has only one commandment, which is "Hate thy neighbour"; and anybody mistrusting every stranger he meets, or refusing to them harmless information politely asked for, is I take it qualifying to be a good anti-christian. As the world becomes more complex, and more and more strangers are met with, coming from great distances by mechanical transport, this attitude increases, and it is even organized and fostered, and

not merely left to individual rudeness. I admit that organized suspicion has stopped bag-snatching; I remember when it was common, and I have noticed the increase in the streets of people who, apart from their silly little signs, are obviously on the look out for that kind of thing, for one can tell them by the hatred in their eyes, since all passers-by are to them potential bag-snatchers. A very high official once told me that when he took certain steps of a preventive nature, the incidence of crime in London immediately decreased. This is an argument in favour of organized suspicions; and the ending of bag-snatching, which recently was so common, is a proof of its efficacy. But I state it here as my opinion that the safety of handbags and shop-windows has been won at the cost of the lowering of the level of Christianity in our cities. Let whoever can, estimate the harm that is done by cultivating in the young the evil thought that their first attitude to their neighbour should be to suspect him, and even to pass on this rudeness by obvious little signs to the next anti-christian in sight. Proofs from the observation of years would be tedious, or even from a single day. Of course not to observe at all may be best, and then you are not insulted; but if I write books and they are offered for sale and I have no observation I am then of that considerable body that in various ways cheat the public. One word of warning before I leave this subject: there was a boy with an air-gun, and a small band that he led, who declared to his followers that the Public was the enemy, and treated his neighbours accordingly, though his only ammunition was cut from potatoes. The magistrates punished this boy, but I have seen so many quite young people at the horrid game of suspicion, that someone must be teaching large numbers of them to look on the public as this boy did; someone in fact is working amongst the young as a recruiting-sergeant for Antichrist. Against the hope that, by suspecting all men, one young man may some day prevent a murder I will put this actual fact: the third Lord de Mauley, who never harmed anyone in his life, used to travel a good deal by bicycle, for he could not afford more expensive means of travelling; and once, going by small lanes and by-paths, he got among fields in the evening and lost his way; as night came on he met a boy and asked him the way to a road; but the boy was one whose mind had been perverted in some vile way till the public were to him the enemy that the boy with the air-gun had proclaimed them to be, and he would not show Lord de Mauley the way to shelter, and the old man died of exposure.

CHAPTER V

SOIL AND CLAY

FROM Arden I went to Kildalton, where my old host rests on a hill among his stags. Sometimes we shot grouse there and on other days I went stalking, and I got three stags on the hills that rise up from the sea's inlets, as white with swans as are ornamental waters, and that look away to the north to the bens of Jura. Thence I went south to Yorkshire, to shoot partridges with another pleasant party at Helperby. Then to London, where so much occurs every day, where one meets so many; but to use my simile of the leaves again, it is as though one went at the end of October into the midst of a forest where a storm was always blowing and tried to catch bright leaves. How many of them would one bring away? How many hours can one remember of past years in London? One flash one remembers here from talk at an undated dinner-party, or there from some evening at a club, or one remembers a play one has seen, and a few pictures in the National Gallery; but I am all too conscious that anybody with a careful note-book could make a book the size of this one out of one day in London, while I propose to use about thirteen years. One play I remember fairly clearly, that I saw in London, though I forget in what year, and that was Galsworthy's *Loyalties,* and more clearly still Barrie's play that preceded it, *Shall We Join the Ladies,* for I preferred the whims of Barrie to the grim purpose of Galsworthy. Galsworthy, with his burning sense of social injustice, always reminded me of a race-horse harnessed to a mowing-machine, handicapped in the race by the weight of the mowing-machine, and yet only urged to race at all by the clatter of it behind him; for I felt, much as one deplores a political purpose straying on to the stage when it should have stayed on the platform, that we should have had no plays from Galsworthy at all, had he not been driven to write them by the political purpose that seems to be such a drag on them. But that particular play I think I only remember more clearly than other plays now on account of an irrelevant incident that happened to occur as I saw it; for such are the whims of memory, and they are all that I have to rely on to make this book, except for a few lists of game and stories that I have already mentioned. I was at a matinée, in the stalls, and a man in front of me began to snore, and then collapsed. I

stepped over the seat and carried him out, and I remember to this day how the saucers of tea-cups crackled under my feet as I went, like shells on a seashore. As I got to the end of the row a doctor appeared, and as soon as I had carried the man out of the auditorium the doctor made it clear that my usefulness was over; and, as the patient was an American, and as he had come to see a play, I had a lingering feeling that it would have interested him to know who had carried him out, which would not have been the case, at any rate then, with an Englishman. But one cannot force that sort of information on people, even when they are well.

And I have memories of occasional chess, but only occasional, for chess can completely fill a lifetime, and is indeed so satisfying that it needs neither excuse nor reward; so that, if I was still to work for the sake of those that read my tales, I had to overcome not only idleness, but the temptation to stray from the world of green fields to that of alternate squares. I played occasionally for Kent, under Mr. R. H. S. Stevenson, who has done so much for chess, not only in Kent but in England; and, though rarely, I played at the Imperial Chess Club, where one day in what is called a lightning tournament, in which play has to be quick rather than thoughtful, I won a prize that has been of immense value to me, a magnetized chess-board, with which one can play in trains or in any sea, a thing that is handy in peace and invaluable in war. Mr. Stevenson died in the summer of 1943, deeply regretted by all English chess-players. At one time there were chess-matches among the London clubs, and I sometimes played for the Carlton and for the Athenaeum. In spite of what I have said about chess filling a lifetime, I think that there are many occupations that may be combined with it; but they must be occupations that have their regular hours, and chess can be played when those hours are over, for I think that the human brain is not easily tired and, provided the work is different, can take up a bit of hard work as a recreation from work of another kind, though the body is unable to recuperate itself by running a mile as a rest from other hard work. And I think that if one gets a headache from writing for too many hours, it is not the brain that has tired, but that concentration of all one's energies for too long on the brain has deprived such things as the lights and the liver of whatever energies they may require, so that eventually one of them sends up bad blood to the brain. I speak as a doctor of letters, not of medicine. But however full a man may fill his leisure with chess and start fresh next morning on another kind of work, one cannot so easily fit chess in with

literature, because literature has not its regular hours, and so one can never say when chess may not interrupt it: chess is a mighty rival, the only art I know that is also a science, calling almost equally upon fancy and reason. Chess has been to me like a wonderful country into which I travelled when young and left, and have afterwards moved outside its borders, crossing them now and then, and soon coming out again. Had I chosen to become an inhabitant of that land a splendid chance was offered to me in the spring of 1939, which was to go to Buenos Ayres at the expense of the Chess Federation of Argentina, to play for Ireland on a team of four against teams of masters from all the countries of Europe. I did not go, which was as well, for, though the tournament was held, it was soon interrupted by a similar game played on a board with far larger squares.

I wrote a Jorkens tale in London that autumn, with the scene in the Bahr el Gazai, which was printed in the *Strand* and in the American paper *Vanity Fair*; and another with a scene in the mountains of the Sahara, which was printed in the *Observer;* and I wrote what I fancied was an original ghost story, which appeared in *Time and Tide.*

Then came the exhibition of my clay images at Colnaghi's, with the lovely china figures of Miss Gwendolen Parnell and others. The exhibition was honoured by a visit from Queen Mary, and I wished when showing the Queen round my part of it that my figures had a little of the grace that one may sometimes get into a poem, but which certainly was not in them. A poem of mine is in the library of Her Majesty's dolls'-house, to which many writers had contributed a few years earlier, writing in volumes about two inches high.

I was asked to write a preface for Messrs. Colnaghi's catalogue, which may give a faint impression of what the exhibition was about, so I quote it here:

"Having numbered among my acquaintance no foreign generals, no cardinals, no monks, very few prophets, and no devils, I have attempted to fill the want by making the figures exhibited here. Anyone seeking for the originals of them will only find gaps where they never were, but where I feel that they ought to have been. The astonishment of the exquisite figures of Miss Parnell and Miss Simpson at finding themselves in such company will be expressed, in those hours of the night when such things find voices, with a delicacy of scorn altogether beyond the comprehension of my low-browed company.

“The pots and the dishes of Mr. Dalton, Mr. Cardew and Mr and Mrs. Norton can speak for themselves far better than I could presume to speak for them, who have never made a pot in my life.”

And then we went back to Ireland and I returned to the life of the country and shot our dinner until the first of March. And in the early days of January 1933 I made a play for the B.B.C. by a method that I have described in another volume; that is to say, instead of waiting for an idea to come, I dug up an old one that I had put into a story, as one might dig for treasure in one’s own garden, and thus I made the play called *The Use of Man,* which has often been in the ether. And on February 12th I started on an entirely new venture. People who had never read anything I wrote, and there were many of those in England, often said to me; “Oh, yes, I know your clever Irish stories.” But I had never written an Irish story in my life. However much I have travelled, my thoughts have travelled much more, and they travelled far and went eastward, and they had not travelled long before they were beyond the lands that I knew, and so I had to invent lands for them. These invented lands were very unlike Ireland, as their names alone might show: Tholdenblarna, Perdondaris, Golnuz, Belzoond and Merimna. But one day long before 1933, the late Mr. Charles Masterman, once a member of the Liberal Government, said to me à propos nothing, with considerable conviction, “You ought to write a tale about Ireland. That’s what you ought to do.”

So sure he seemed of what he had said, that I remembered his words for years. And all the while I was seeing more of Ireland, as I went about the country shooting. Who knows if even a pinprick may have finally started me? For a pin may make a horse gallop. Yeats had invented the Irish Academy of Letters and had omitted me, which was no surprise; though his reason for doing so was surprising, which was that I did not write about Ireland. I told one or two Irish writers that I too was going to start an Academy, an academy to honour the names of writers of the fourteenth century in Italy; for I said that, since writers work for posterity, it was not a bit too late to honour fourteenth-century writers now. Who, I asked, would they suggest? Dante of course was suggested; but I was shocked. “Most certainly not,” I said, stroking my hair as Yeats used to stroke his. “Dante did not write about Italy, but of a very different place. Most unsuitable!”

One does not need a point so blunt as that for it to be seen at once in Ireland. This then may have been the trifling sting that stimulated my

energies. I do not know if it was, but it may have been, because once it seemed that Yeats thought so, for he questioned me very closely as to why I had started the book, and his insight is not likely to have been wrong. This then, for all I know, may have slightly aroused my energies; but there are other ingredients in this book, and I am afraid that one is laziness. For I had always held that, since the arts are creative, an artist ought to create, and that he should work like the spider and not like the magpie. Was Charles Masterman right? Were the Irish hills and bogs and the Irish people material delicate enough to be handled by one accustomed to work in rather fanciful dreams? If anywhere imagination could be blended with earth, it seemed just possible that it might be in Ireland. I might try. But it would be lazy work compared to such work as I had to put into *The King of Elfland's Daughter,* for I knew Ireland pretty well, and picking up handfuls of its soft earth all round me would be very much easier than waiting for fancies to come, or trying to induce their arrival. I felt somewhat like a sculptor, accustomed to work only in rare marbles, turning to work with chance handfuls of the soil that lay all round him, yet somewhat enchanted soil, so that it might perhaps do as well. And so on February 12th, 1933, I started my first Irish novel. Perhaps the ease of writing with material so ready to hand, instead of with fancies that imagination had to bring from so far, gave to this story a certain vividness, so that some supposed it was autobiographical. This was not the case, and yet I suppose that, when one writes of a country one knows, each scene described, each fence jumped in a hunt, is something that one must have actually seen. At one end one gets to know a countryside, and at the other one writes a tale that is fairly true to it: it would be odd if many scenes did not coincide, even although unconsciously. Perhaps the vividest scene in that story may be where four murderers come to shoot a man in a house at night, and they swear his son on a sacred relic there is in that house to tell them where his father is, and, while they all threaten him with their pistols, they kneel before him as he holds the relic. I almost wondered at the vividness of this scene, until I remembered that I had actually seen a row of armed men kneeling before me in Ireland; although in my case they were not kneeling to any relic, though I have one in my house, but merely for convenience in firing. This was in the Dublin rebellion, and they came up from their kneeling position, with their rifles still at their shoulders, before beginning to shoot at me. The boy's father is duly murdered, though not by these four, and the book tells

the boy's story as he looks back from old age, and briefly the story of the four men, and their diverse ends, one being murdered himself by the other three, one falling as a soldier in the Great War, another dying of remorse for something he had done, and the fourth going to penal servitude for life and becoming, on being let out, the President of the Council of the League of Nations. Yet, I repeat, the whole story is fiction.

CHAPTER VI

DISARMAMENT AND OTHER DREAMS

I DID very little work besides shooting snipe and writing my Irish novel, once I had started on it, and the novel kept me fairly busy from February 12th to May 27th, in 1933. At the end of April we went over to England, stopping at Shrewsbury on the way, in order to visit a property that I have in Radnorshire, but where I have no house except the farmhouses, though one of them is an old manor-house; hills with sheep and curlews on them and great oak beams above the fireplaces of the farmhouses, and bacon curing among the rafters, in the country just west of the land of which Housman wrote,

Clunton and Clunbury
Clungunford and Clun
Are the quietest places
Under the sun.

In Cadogan Square I continued my story; and, when I was quite near the end of it, we went to hear Beethoven's Ninth Symphony at the Queen's Hall, a thing that to me seems to be to music very much what the Himalayas are to other mountains. While listening to this stupendous symphony I suddenly realized what my novel was all about, the thread that ran through the whole of it, and what the title must be. So I named the novel from the title that came to me then, *The Curse of the Wise Woman.* And on May 27th I finished the book with a few valedictory words to the book's principal villain, whom I had made so much of an Irishman that I had come to be fond of him, for there is always something lovable even among the worst of these men. And let no Englishman find fault with this sentiment in me, for Englishmen are the worst offenders of the lot, and there is no form of government to which they would not hand us over, if the demand for it were sung to them in voices sufficiently wistful.

Then we went to Dunstall, where the blackbirds sing so well; and I wrote a few poems, but little more than that until August 1st, when I wrote an article called "Green Withes To Bind Mars," in which I argued with some

heat against a method that had been invented, and was then being discussed, for preventing any more war. For I thought it a disastrous thing for people to be putting thought and energies into a method for preventing war, which could not possibly prevent it. The danger was similar to the danger of trying to shoot an elephant with an airgun, fortified with such arguments as that the air in the gun would exhaust the air in his lungs and that the elephant would fall dead at once, or that the softness of the air would blunt his tusks or cause them instantly to decay. The method then being discussed was disarmament, and I do not think that the people who advocated it even meant anything more than the abolition of the larger kind of gun. I pointed out that the only important effect of disarmament would be to increase the importance of cavalry, and that it would make fighting on land and sea even deadlier; at sea because ships that cannot now easily approach each other would ram each other at once, and on land because disarmed infantry would meet at once, and you could hardly take away the knives and forks that Scots soldiers carry in their stockings, and of which they have made use in battle before now. My certainty that disarmament could have no effect whatever upon preventing war appeared to be regarded as quite a new theory, and a politician to whom I mentioned it was quite angry, but the moment that I suggested to Lord Keyes that the loss of life to which it would lead at sea would be appalling, he saw it at once. When the talk of disarmament was at its height, I forget in exactly what year, I was kindly entertained by the Bowyers Company of London, and had to pay for my dinner in the usual way by a speech. I said that I would talk of disarmament, and there was an audible groan from at least one man who was sick of it. I pointed out how the bowyers would come into their own, if disarmament meant what it said; but only for a while, for after they had dominated all battlefields for a few years, there would be a world-wide outcry against their brutality, from which they would have eventually to hide their heads in shame.

On August 21st I wrote an article called “Building a Sentence,” which was printed in the *Spectator* and the *Atlantic Monthly*. The gist of it was that, when building a sentence, punctuation is the scaffolding, and that if printers or typists or printers’ readers are permitted to interfere with it the effect on the work must be bad, as would be the effect on a builder’s work if boys were allowed to run away with bits of the scaffolding and use it for firewood. As a result of this article I got a very interesting letter from an

American judge, pointing out that this very thing had once cost a million dollars. For a law had been passed in the United States, and a printer had decorated it in the usual way with an extra comma, of course changing its meaning, just as the meaning of this sentence would be replaced by ambiguity if a printer were to be allowed to put a comma after "of course," which printers are extremely fond of doing; and the money they lost, added to the cost of passing a new law, amounted to a million dollars. This collaboration between a writer and a printer's reader, whom he has never seen, is so prevalent that nobody reading anything can be sure he is reading what the author wrote. I have made many protests about this, but not nearly enough, for it is as powerful a little evil as the mosquito. The essence of the evil is that certain words have an ancient right to be decorated with commas by printers, so that when a naval officer reported, "I ordered a change of course at 12.5 p m.," it had to be printed, "I ordered a change, of course, at 12.5 p m."; and, as the reader will see, there is a complete change of meaning, as there always must be when punctuation is ignorantly interfered with. When I use the word *ignorantly* I only mean that the printer is ignorant of the art of writing, as I am ignorant of an em: let us each keep to our own job. There are no doubt writers whose punctuation is poor; but even then it is better to leave their work alone.

At Arden, where I again had grouse-shooting, where the moors lie high above the lands that know cities, as though they were of some different world, I wrote a poem called "A Dictator's Song," about Hitler's persecution of the Jews, suggesting that all would not be well with that dictator, which is even now the case, and would be even far more so if he were alive when this book is published. The poem was published in *The Jewish Chronicle* in September 1938, though without its name, for one had still to be careful what one said of dictators then, having been warned by Mr. Chamberlain that even a shout might start an avalanche, though we all know now that the avalanche had made up its mind to do its natural work without waiting for any of us to shout.

And then in October I wrote two more plays for the B.B.C., both taken, as I usually did take plays for the ether, from tales I had written before; but one of these, *The Bureau de Change de Maux,* was a great improvement on the original tale, chiefly on account of a character called Salignac, who only does big business, where evils are exchanged by magic and everyone is very eager to exchange his own evil. The little tourist who strays by

accident into the strange shop is pushed aside by the sinister proprietor when he suggests exchanging some trifle with the dominating and fierce Salignac, who finally makes his exchange, after shouting his disapproval of the rusty pen with which he signs the bond with a woman acting on behalf of her husband, whose evil is that he has to die on the guillotine next morning. What Salignac's big business is, what evil he exchanges for the guillotine in the morning, is not revealed.

In December Messrs. Methuen had the idea of exploiting a topic which in 1933 was still of interest to a certain number of people, and I only hope that they had time to get their money back before the bloom wore off the idea. For the idea was concerned with dictators. They asked six people each to write a book, from a third to a quarter the length of a novel, under the title *If l Were Dictator,* and I was asked to be one of the six. My old friend E. V. Lucas was then managing Methuens, and the line I took was, using not inappropriately the language of the late Kaiser, that I had been inscrutably appointed to be dictator by E. V. Lucas. Any objection as to why I should be dictator of the British Empire was thus at once swept aside: it was inscrutable. And any explanation that was needed was given at once: I had been appointed by E. V. Lucas. And the many that knew E. V. Lucas will admit that I was appointed to this high office by a far pleasanter fellow than the one that appointed Hitler, which was Adolf. I called my book as a sub-title "The Pronouncements of the Grand Macaroni," and I made many suggestions which were extremely obvious, but some of them seem not yet to have been thought of by others, and at that time none of them. I laid it down that my principal pronouncements were to be engraved on brass in every village, and that anyone seeing them should raise both hands as though in delight and wonder. Anybody raising his hands as though in wonder, but not delight, should be thrown into prison. For it is no use writing such a book without displaying the spirit of a dictator. I took about a month over this book, and meanwhile went on with my usual shooting, and hunting when hounds came near. And that winter I wrote three more Jorkens stories, one of them, called "A Mystery of the East," telling how Jorkens had got a fakir in Benares so to arrange things with the future that a ticket he has for a sweep worth £40,000 shall be taken first from the drum, in a draw that there is to be in a few weeks time. On the way home he asks a man learned in Indian ways if such magic is possible, and this man says Certainly, and he actually knows an Arab who can do it, who lives in the

Ouled Nail Mountains. He describes to Jorkens just where this man lives in his square white house in that desolate region, and Jorkens buys another ticket and goes to the Ouled Nail Mountains in order to make quite sure. And this man blesses his ticket in the same way as the fakir in Benares did with the other ticket. And so Jorkens has clear proof that the mystery of the East can do all it pretends, for he soon reads in the papers that two tickets were accidentally drawn together out of the drum, and were both put back.

That February, that is to say 1934, I also wrote an article called "What Have We Here," which appeared in *Time and Tide*. It began with these five lines:

The Bosphorus, the moon, the Pleiades
All arch themselves through interstellar ways.
Have they not swum to these intensities,
Outweighing far the rigours of these days,
Fecund as flame, lambent as morning song?

And I reprint them here because I attach a little importance to the subject on which I was writing.

The article continued thus in prose:

"Now reader, have you yet seen clearly and for certain that you are reading nonsense? That is the essential point. For poetry is sense, very strong sense, expressed with beauty. And not to recognize nonsense is surely to make insufficient distinction between it and poetry."

And I said that poetry was sense and that before ever it was clothed with beauty there was first of all a statement, profound or joyful, well worth passing on from one mind to others; and I urged that a poet had a duty to make his meaning as clear as possible, and that the reader had a duty to find that meaning out.

And that month I wrote a philosophic story about two spirits that are told before birth that they must have one month in prison when on earth, and that they can choose for themselves whatever riches and honours they like. One of them rashly chooses very great honours, the other chooses to be a gipsy. So, when the crash comes for the grandee of Austria, and they both

go to the same prison, it is only a trivial episode to the gipsy. And the gipsy's mother explains to them both what had happened in the days before they set out for their sojourn on earth. This story was never taken by any editor, for a reason I quite approve: I believe it must have been thought that it might cause pain to anyone who had ever fallen by misfortune from any high place. I did not think myself that so remote a story could possibly touch the edges of any story here; but, if this was thought, I entirely approve of the humanity that decided against letting the story appear, such a humanity as must be quite undreamed of by those who in 1943 still rule the most of Europe.

I wrote a few more tales and poems during the spring, including a tale inspired by the need for my article about punctuation. It was called "The Deeper Meanings of Spriggett," and told of a writer whose profounder meanings were always supplied by the printer, by just that rearrangement of commas of which I had complained in my article. Ultimately he is unable to live on the high pinnacles of thought whereon the printer had placed him, and his triviality is found out, and falling from such an altitude his reputation is ruined.

In May Mr. Peter Davies asked me to do a modernized fairy story for a book of them that he proposed to bring out. So I opened a book of Grimm's Fairy Tales and chose the first one that caught my eye, "Little Snow-white," and it was very amusing to see what merry fancies Mr. Peter Davies's idea provided when one completely modernized the story. For instance, when the villainess, Lady Clink, takes what she believes to be the heart of Blanche to her cook, she explains that it is the heart of an eland, which completely satisfies the cook, for they had both got their knowledge of elands from the crosswords. It is of course not really the heart of Blanche, whom Lady Clink has ordered her chauffeur to run down, but that of a mere pedestrian that the chauffeur mercifully kills in Blanche's place. When the cook asks Lady Clink how she would like the heart to be done she replies "*Au gratin*." And, when everything seems to be going well with the villainess, her magic gramophone utters a rhyme such as those in which Grimm delighted:

You were the fairest, Lady Clink,
But Blanche is fairer now I think.

On July 17th and 18th I wrote one chapter of a book that I had intended to write for some while, although I had not till now decided upon the form of it. The idea that I had was to read the thoughts of a dog as though a man were actually thinking them. It was not an ordinary dog-story I had in mind, but rather a method of tapping thoughts. I had thought of doing it by means of some electric current, but in the end I turned from this modern device to a very ancient one and made use of the theory of transmigration, and the momentary illumination of a man's memory from beyond the gates of death and life. This illumination I decided to bring about by the power of wine, when exactly the right quantity was consumed, neither more nor less, and the character that was to make these revelations was to be a dean, between whose rather polished language and the dog's thoughts that he utters, is a continual contrast that to me seemed to give some promise of humour. I named this book, as I name all my books, from what it is actually about, and yet it amused me to think how misleading the title is; for I called it *My Talks With Dean Spanley*; and Mr. Evans, of Heinemann's firm, who published it, was evidently amused by the same thought, for he had the title printed in old ecclesiastical English. The reminiscences of this dean, looking back not on the life that he now leads, but on the one before, make the book. This looking as it were through the wrong door, is only brought about by luring the dean to take a drop more than he should, and the difficulty of doing this with a dean perhaps adds a touch of adventure to the tale; and it can only be done at all with the rarest Tokay, and not easily then, as any dean will tell you. It was more than two years before I went on beyond the first chapter, and then I finished it in three weeks. When Heinemanns published the book in 1936, with a weird illustration by Sime, a drawing was done for the cover by Miss Herry Perry, which was a triumphant combination of a dean and a spaniel. As she told me afterwards that she had never known a dean, it must have been the dog that she had studied so carefully, and yet there is a wonderfully ecclesiastical look about him. I may say that it is so far from being a skit upon deans that I will challenge any dean to dislike this book, provided that he ever kept a dog. And a few days later I wrote more about dogs, an article for *The Animals*' *Advocate,* whose editor had asked me for one, and which I called "A Plea For A Humble Possession." As the paper was for people who were fond of animals I said nothing against the more barbarous cruelties, and concerned myself with the only cruelty that people otherwise kind commit. I wrote against the folly of saying that a dog's tail

was “long,” and of remedying this error of the Creator by cutting most of it off; of the unfairness of mutilating a dog because one’s own eye has been warped by fashion, instead of correcting one’s eye by owning an uninjured dog,’ which is very easily done; and I mentioned a few of the many uses that dogs have for their tails, and suggested that, as they have so few possessions, we should never deprive a dog of one of them unless the temptation to do so was overwhelming. And I was not quite sure what justification we had for doing it even then.

It was very pleasant to hear from time to time that I saved a few dogs from this cruel deprivation.

During August 1934 I wrote some poems that cannot be of general interest, nor are they of great interest to myself, yet I mention them because I am trying to tell the story of my life, and because they seem to explain that a poet does not choose his themes, but that he writes whenever stirred by anything that is sufficiently large to inspire him. It may be by the beauty of dawn or spring that he is inspired, but, since the choice is not his, he may be equally moved by grim topics, and he may be stirred by the storm as well as by the anemones. An old companion of my mother’s who had lived with her both at Dunstall and at her other place, Charborough in Dorset, had written to ask if she might come and see Dunstall again. She came, and said little for some while, and then she told us a tale of most extraordinary villainy, which later I was able to corroborate, once I had been put on the right line. It is not a subject I should have dreamed of choosing for poetry; but the magnitude of the villainy somehow stirred me to write verse, as much as some beautiful tale of honesty might have done. Indeed the only difference in the power of a great robbery and a great benevolence is the minus sign in front of one of them. Yes, it must be the size of an event that stirs one, and not only the beauty; otherwise there would be no great robberies ever told of in verse, but only lovely things like flowers and dawns and sunsets and fine deeds. Inspiration is not voluntary, but is a reaction to whatever may touch the spirit, as a lake will mirror a petal that falls to it from a cherry-tree, or frown at a stone cast into it, and with its deeps untroubled.

CHAPTER VII

FAREWELL TO A.E.

I HAD a good deal of shooting in the autumn of 1934, beginning with a very good grouse-shoot on the lovely moors of Arden, and I had three shoots at partridges with my neighbour Sir Roger Gregory, and one with Mr. Arthur Cornwallis, an old friend who had taken the shooting of Lullingstone Park. And I went to a partridge-shoot at Fawkham, which is only a few miles from my house, and later to a pheasant-shoot there. Fawkham is the property of Sir Thomas Hohler, and the house is full of trophies of his travels; and among these trophies was once the private code of von Papen, in which he used to write to recommend the sinking of ships. And we went to Helperby again for three days shooting. Partly at Arden and partly at Dunstall I wrote a story for the B.B.C., adapting to the microphone a tale that I had written two years earlier, called "The Ghost of the Old Corridor," and which I now called "The Return"; and I wrote a play for them called *Time's Joke,* and a few articles for the *Morning Post* and a few poems. And I wrote the words of a song for one of those composers who now and then write to me from different parts of the world, asking me to let them make an opera of my *Gods of the Mountain,* or some other play of mine. An opera takes so long to write, and probably longer to get produced, that I never knew how much of these operas was hope and how much achievement; but I welcomed the hope, for hopes are bright things, and indeed a hope without achievement is better than achievement without hope; for the first will be bright always, however few people see it, and the second must be dull in all men's eyes. I started this chapter off with a few facts, because I have them in old records, but my sympathies are with the hopes. The man who was going to write this opera wanted something for someone to sing at certain points, and so I wrote a song for him, and another a little later. Occasionally I tried, as we all do, to look into the dark of the future, and in an article that I wrote for the *Morning Post* called "What Of The Night" I suggested that machinery, much as we adored it, might under the test of war prove brittler than man, and I ended that article with these two sentences: "The Japanese lived for centuries without stone houses. It is not impossible that that other disaster, war, which bides its time

like the earthquake, may one day turn Europe away from destructible things, to dwell in an older simplicity."

Early in December we returned to Ireland, where out-of-doors I resumed my usual occupations, and indoors wrote a few more poems and two more Jorkens stories. And one day Mr. Sieveking of the B.B.C. came to stay with us, and we spoke of plays for the ether. And my wife took him out to tea with a neighbour; and while they were out I wrote a short play, and read it to him when he came back. It was a play called *Fame Comes Late,* and, as I had written another play for the ether two months earlier, also about dilatory Fame, called *Time's Joke,* the two were combined in one programme with a play that I had written years ago for the stage, called *Fame and the Poet*; and all three were done by the B.B.C., under the title *Three Moods of Fame.* A poem that I wrote on January 27th, 1935, I reproduce here, for I saw the scene of the last verse very vividly, and poems that are made from the vividest pictures are usually the favourite poems of those who write them. I called it "Looking Seawards," and here is the poem:

Today I read the songs of one
Dead barely five and twenty years,
Whose notes across Oblivion
Scarce any listener hears.

And then I thought — so great a war
Has raged between our days and his
That only mightiest things before
Live in our memories.

Therefore to singers all I say:
With stoutest planks and hugest beams,
Here labouring in the Port of Day,
Build strong your ship of dreams.

For in the night outside I see
Great storms preparing, from whose grips
I think shall come triumphantly
Only the noblest ships.

The poet of whom I was thinking when I wrote it was Richard Middleton.

In February I wrote a tale called “Jorkens Handles A Big Property.” In this story Jorkens sells the Gulf Stream. He sells it, on a commission basis, for a man in New Orleans who has invented a simple method of diverting it at its source in the Gulf of Mexico. Whatever country will buy it can have the Gulf Stream. But, if England buys it, a lot of trouble and expense will be saved by leaving it where it is; so Jorkens sets out to try to sell it to the Government for a million, explaining in Whitehall to a high official what it will mean to Londoners to have the climate of Siberia, as they will if the Gulf Stream is removed. Jorkens in telling the story brushes aside the question of blackmail, by explaining that the Gulf Stream is lying about in the sea for anyone who has the ingenuity to take it, just like whales. The high official sees the point and agrees, but says that it will be another matter to get the Treasury to put up the money, any more than they did for the defences of Scapa Flow before 1914. For I wrote of a more happy-go-lucky England than we can now believe to have ever existed. When Jorkens cannot sell it for any sum, he halves the price and goes on to someone else. He tries so many businesses and interests, which refuse to do the deal, that he sells it at last to a landlady on the Cornish coast for no more than £10, for which he gets £1 as his commission, and the Gulf Stream is left where it is. I think that anyone interested in business will agree, if they ever see this tale, that Jorkens’s arguments are all sound, and that he goes to the right people.

In that month of February 1935 I also wrote two prefaces that I had been asked to write for books. One was for Miss Nancy Price, whom I had always regarded as being of the urban company of Dr. Johnson rather than of the rural folk like Wordsworth. But her book about Westmorland was written quite from the inside, with a wonderful sympathy for its hills and valleys.

When the shooting ended I was at a loose end, and I only waited a week before settling down to the grim work of writing a novel, which occupied me nearly every day from March 8 th to April 18 th, actually forty working days, the shortest time in which I had ever written a novel. This novel tells of recent Irish wars, and I claimed to be a historian when I had written it, but I am afraid the claim won’t stand. It tells of many battles, the greatest of which is interrupted by hounds coming to draw the covert beside which the

battle is raging, and the old huntsman tells one of the generals that they cannot fight a battle there, because the covert must be drawn. The battle continues later, but its whole strategy has been altered because the hounds are believed to have killed a badger in the wood and the whole of one army goes to look at the dead badger, a movement which completely outflanks the other army. One of the generals who tells the story ends up as a private in the Irish Guards. I do not think anybody reading that book would find any falsity in the general trend of it, and yet I do not see anybody according me a place among other historians.

We went to Kent, and I wrote a few articles, and a story called "The Mad Ghost," from a plot that had been presented to me by Rudyard Kipling. That was the last year that we saw Kipling in his house at Burwash, though we once more saw Mrs. Kipling there.

In July I wrote a poem containing the three lovely lines:

When Umpire Lee
Was hit on the knee
By a very fast ball from Faber.

I had found the lines, like a jewel in a piece of common rock, in the prose of a report of a cricket match in a Sunday paper.

And I wrote in that month of July a story told by my character, Jorkens, in his club, of a rather shady doctor who, by a course of treatment lasting a fortnight, can make a man twenty years older in every respect. When they doubt the utility of this treatment, Jorkens tells the story of a man who has every reason to defeat identification, but who, frightened lest he still be recognized after one treatment, takes a second course, though the fee is a thousand pounds, well worth it to such as need to alter their appearance entirely; but before his second course is completed he dies of old age, which is none the less deadly for being induced artificially. And shortly afterwards I wrote another Jorkens story, called "The Grecian Singer," of a lady of rather mysterious origin, thought to come from Greece, but not so much suggesting modern Greece as the Greece of Homer.

And on July 17th I saw a very bright meteor flash through the late evening with a green glare. Next day I heard that A.E., whom I regard as the finest poet Ireland ever produced, had died. The strange glowing meteor,

coming out of invisibility to cross the western sky and pass into invisibility again, placed suddenly before me a natural parallel, or reflection, of the life of this poet, which was so mysterious and beautiful that the material of the poem that I wrote that day for my friend was almost given to me: certainly no effort of my intellect was needed.

To A.E.

Now you are gone you seem a visitor,
Something that haunted for a little time
The splendour of the evening, or astir
With bees in blooms of lime;
Or, at the hour when mothers tell old tales
To children, something passing through the gleams
Of cottage windows; or, on western gales
Riding, a king of dreams;
Or about hawthorns lingering to greet
The earliest may amongst the blazing green,
Or through the heather travelling to meet
Spirits we have not seen;
A lovely radiance of a passing star
Upon a sudden journey through the gloaming,
Lighting low Irish hills, and then afar
To its own regions homing.

CHAPTER VIII

BETTER FIFTY YEARS OF EUROPE?

AFTER some shooting-parties in October we went to London. And then came a remarkable event, the Chinese Exhibition at Burlington House. It brought to London a lore that we are almost too busy to know, and a beauty that we have not yet had time to surpass. Naturally I wrote one or two poems then, for, if one could not find inspiration amongst these things that so many ages had suddenly cast on our shores, one would be unlikely to find it anywhere. I also wrote an article for it for the *Morning Post.* I remember one marvellous picture, and it had a marvellous name, "A Thousand Miles of the Yangtse." It showed a stream coming out of the mountains, and tributaries joining it, and a long stretch of the river, and many yards of landscape, and then the great estuary with ships upon it. One saw a few people approaching it with wonder in their eyes, but most of them had the expression that only detectives wear, for such treasures needed watching. And there was a luminous stone about ten inches high, of a fiery orange colour, out of which the artist had carved what might not readily suggest itself to us as a subject to be portrayed in a semi-precious stone; he had carved a mountain.

And there was a colossal statue of Buddha, with the calm of ages in his face, which one saw first as one came in and last as one went out. I ended my article on the wonders of that exhibition with a few sentences on that statue, the last two of which went thus: "At three o'clock the electric light is turned on, and the face of the huge statue seems a little further from smiling, for it was made for sunlight and moonlight. So were we; but we may have forgotten much that the statue seems to remember."

Shortly after I wrote a poem to a lovely teapot I saw there. This is it:

ON A TEAPOT OF KIEN LUNG

I saw a peony Upon a teapot drawn,
Pale-pink as mists the sea

Sends landward from the dawn:

Two petals, unaware
Of their appointed hour,
Fell, and on wings of air
A wasp flew to the flower;
Another hung inert
Upon a lazy breeze.
Ah! How shall we convert
The ignorant Chinese?

And I wrote a poem that December which I think may be said to be of general interest, because it touches on the way in which we handle electricity; and our treatment of so great a power may give a hint of our fitness to dominate the world, or a warning as to what may come of that domination. I called it "To A Mighty People" and the first verse of it went like this:

We are masters of all creation,
There is nothing we cannot do,
Petrol and steam are our servants,
And nitro-toluol too,
Yet we make a shade for electric lamps
With a hole for the flame to go through.

At the same time I wrote an article that appeared in the *Atlantic Monthly,* which I called "Symptoms of Decay in the Language." I wrote, as I have done before and since, to lament the loss of the adjective and to protest that there is no reason for it whatever. I gave as an example of lost adjectives the words luxurious and mysterious, their loss being proved not by their disappearance, for there might be no occasion to use them, but by the use, when they are required, of nouns instead, so that we read of a mystery man in a luxury car. And I protest again here, though I have done it before; for the need to save the language grows greater every year, and one does not say to a man during a fire, "You have been running up and down with that bucket several times already. Haven't you done it enough?" In the year in which I write, the harmless, useful words *large* and *small* are dropping out

of the language to go the way of *weather,* never to be mentioned without being propped up by another word, as though their own meanings were gone. One reads no longer of a small or large attack or raid or withdrawal, but only of large-scale attacks, small-scale withdrawals, and so on. While we beat the Germans, their clumsy way of using nouns is fast overcoming our once more graceful language. To explain my point in this article I translated the first few lines of *Paradise Lost* into modern prose. It went like this: "Of the first man disobedience and the forbidden tree fruit, whose death taste brought on world mortality — Milton was thirty-six years old when he wrote this — and all our woe sing Heaven muse, who on the Horeb or Sinai mystery top inspired etc."

It occurs to me now that "the veto tree fruit" would be a better translation, for lost Latin words are often found like this among the ruins of our language.

And a day or two later I wrote a light article for the *Morning Post,* in which I invented various species of ghosts, classifying them in a pseudo-scientific manner. It was no inspiration, for the topic was suggested to me by my literary agent, and yet the difficulty of writing about something that had no appeal to me for its own sake seems to have been a stimulant, and I like the old tale, now I see it again.

And then on December 17th of this same year, 1935, I settled down seriously to complete *My Talks With Dean Spanley,* and I finished the book by January 7th, 1936. Every now and then, in Turkey, Natal and various other countries I hear of this book; for people own dogs in every land, and gradually the book seems to be reaching them. And if perchance the strange title deceives one here and there, he may come to pray and stay to mock.

On January 18th Kipling died, just before King George V. I wrote poems on both these occasions, the one to the memory of King George V being of course only one voice amidst a world-wide regret. The poem I wrote for Rudyard Kipling I have already quoted in a previous volume, but on the day that he was being buried in the Abbey I sent a wire to my friend H. A. Gwynne, who was then editor of the *Morning Post.* It went like this:

Men turn a rarely troubled clay,
And from our reckoning
The loyalest singer of the day
Goes mute, before his King.

And a few days later I wrote to Mrs. Kipling sending her the enclosed poem.

FOR MRS. KIPLING

Mid winter! And for Rudyard Kipling's bier
We make a wreath when flowers and leaves are few.
And it is winter with all singers too,
Who, as the lesser birds chant not so clear
After the nightingale is no more here,
Sing with less heart than they were wont to do.
And so these lines that I have made for you
Are petals gathered in a garden sere.
Yet would I send them, were they only leaves,
To mark my sympathy in this sad hour,
That would bring comfort if it had the power,
But has it not, and only vainly grieves;
Though in the treasury of England's lore
Light from his heart will live for evermore.

Mrs. Kipling wrote to me saying a thing that surprised me very much indeed, which was that he had few friends. I should have thought that he had many thousand; and indeed he had; but I suppose a certain sensitiveness, without which we should not have had the books that have delighted three generations, made some barrier of which Mrs. Kipling was aware.

On January 30th I wrote an article called "While Critics Slept," dealing with a curious slip by Browning which had never been noticed, though I may say that even from the slips of poets you still get poetry, and it is of far greater importance to understand, or better still to sympathize with, a poet than to detect any little slip; far more important to be able to perceive the beauty of a picture by an old master than to be able to detect that in one part of the picture a fly had got caught in the paint. A few days later I wrote a preface for *My Talks With Dean Spanley,* into which I put the solemnity that

it usually amuses me to put into a preface, but the joke of this book required that the preface should be even especially solemn. And a day or two after that I wrote a story of a scene that had flashed on me with a singular vividness from somewhere I had not been, and indeed from an age in which I had not lived, nor had the story much beginning or end: it was just a vivid scene. It was called "The Cause," and was printed in the *Star* in the following June or July. And the following day I wrote a play for the B.B.C. that I called *Atmospherics*. The property that I used for this play was the old one of a lunatic in a train, so old that one man wrote to me saying, "I was the man who met a lunatic in a train, and you have evidently used my story." But I don't think that his lunatic was the same one as mine, or that he escaped in the way that my man did. My lunatic claimed that he had a wireless brain, and explains to his cockney fellow-passenger that he is now in touch with an oriental god, who demands that he shall kill the cockney with a knife. The play has often been broadcast, and for a book to presume to tell the denouement of a play that has been in the ether is like chasing a horse with a snail. A gardener to whom I was once talking in Yorkshire had listened to this play, and said to me "Well, I suppose you do invent things to make a play. But it didn't sound like it." I was glad that my fancy had been so well accepted by a man with his feet on good earth.

And on February 14th I wrote an article called "The Master," in which I expressed an apprehension that war might come, not for any reasons of a military nature, but because I saw something wrong in our civilization, and such flaws are the prime causes of wars. I agreed that if the people of the United States were to see African ways dominating their country they would have reason to fear that the descendants of slaves were getting the upper hand; and I said that our slaves were not African, but were the machines, and I gave instances to show how the machine was dominating our civilization, and I feared that the growth of its power was bad, and that the system that it was building up would come to be tested by the test of all systems, which is war. The article was printed in the *Spectator* about three months later. And then on February 23rd I started on the first chapter of a new novel and, after writing a couple of articles and a poem, I settled down to the novel on March 8th pretty steadily and went on with it without often taking a day off, till I finished it in London on May 7th. All this time until the end of the shooting season I was shooting snipe and woodcock and different kinds of duck in Ireland, from which we went to London on May

4th. The novel was called *Rory and Bran,* and was about a half-witted Irish boy and his companion, Bran, who looks after him and his cattle as well as he can when Rory tries to drive them from his father's house to the big Cattle-Fair some miles distant. I did not state what Bran was, because I considered it unnecessary: every act of Bran throughout the book was, so far as I have been able to observe, what one in his place would have done. I was looking the other day at a copy of this book that I gave to my wife, and read again a rhyme that I had written in it. It went like this:

This tells of roads by hill and bog,
Of Rory and of Bran.
Some critics hold that Bran's a dog
And some that he's a man.

For not all readers seemed quite agreed about Bran, and one of them complained that he was *rather* silent for an Irishman.

Then I wrote an article for the *Manchester Guardian,* called "A Visit to the Laundry," and I described a big laundry, not from having seen one, but by looking at my shirts and my collars rather with the eye of Sherlock Holmes, and deducing from the rents and cuts in them what weapons were used by the laughing girls at the waterside. And I wrote, for an editor who asked me for something of the kind, an article that is roughly described by its title, "A Fashionable Cruelty," of which I will say no more here, as it was on the same theme as one that I have alluded to earlier. And I wrote a tale for the B.B.C. which I read from Broadcasting House soon after. It was called "The Cut," and it began with perfectly credible dog-stories, which led the listener on by gentle degrees to hear the tale of a dog who, from carrying a penny to a shop and bringing back the morning paper, comes to know the value of money and acquires for himself a starched collar. The climax of this tale is where he meets a man on a hot day wearing no collar and, although he knows him quite well, cuts the man dead. With a little dissertation on what it really feels like to be cut by a dog, and the consternation in the town as they see the dog overstepping those barriers that so rightly exist between dogs and us, the story ends.

CHAPTER IX

A FAMILY OF WORKERS

ABOUT this time, that is to say July 1936, we went to a ruined farmhouse by the bank of the Rother to meet Mr and Miss March, who had their motor-boat waiting there, and we sailed with them a long way down the stream, till we came to the town at the mouth of it. A word about that remarkable family will not be amiss. They are a family of seven workers living at Farnborough in a house whose wisteria-clad walls we had often passed; for it is on the road by which we go from Dunstall to London, about half way. My old friend Captain Edgar McWilliam had introduced us to them, and we often went to see them and sometimes some of them came to see us. Their house and grounds were full of bronze casts that they had made, varying from statuettes to figures larger than life. Some of them were painters, some worked in clay, some cast metal in a furnace, but they all worked. They are all talented, and one of their number had genius, but he died young. He it was that designed the Canadian war-memorial out of a handful of clay, and the rest of them executed it in figures larger than life, and it now stands in Montreal. He was the youngest of them, and I think he made all the best designs. The ones we knew best were Ted March, in whose boat we went on the Rother, and his sister Elsie. There are indications that the house where the Marches live was intended to be the same as thousands of others; but there is in the arts a great power of enchantment, and their house, with its garden behind it, is not quite like any other house I know.

One day I was asked by my literary agent if I would write a book to be called *My Ireland* for Messrs. Jarrold. I replied that writing books to order was not in my line, and at first the suggestion did not attract me. And then an idea occurred to me that would make something to write about, a thread that would hold the whole book together. The idea was a joke, and it was probably that that attracted me, but at the same time it was soberly true to the Irish character. And when I had something to write about I at once accepted. My idea was to tell the reader with all possible solemnity that the serious purpose of the book would be to give him accurately the information for which he would certainly seek, and to obtain which would

be his main reason for reading the book at all; and this was, what the Irish people really thought of the new system of government that they had been given. This information was to be delayed throughout the book by the caution of Irishmen of whom the question is asked, but it was always to be the main purpose of the whole story. And so I made it when I wrote *My Ireland*; but the truest thing to the Irish nature in the whole book is that, orator though he is, an Irishman does not lightly divulge what his real opinions are on political matters: he might succeed in electing very different representatives if he did. So, though enquiries upon this subject are made all through my book, from men who are likely to know the right answer, it ends with a visit to my most reliable informant, who has nothing more to say on the subject than to refer to the body of a man lately found shot in a ditch, who did talk openly about politics. I began this at Arden, where we went again for the grouse-shooting after a partridge-shoot at Helperby, and continued it at Dunstall, where I shot some of my own partridges and some with neighbours. I made this part of the book out of memories; and after a month in London we returned to Dunsany and I did all but the first thirteen chapters from day to day in the Ireland about which I was writing. When I think how easy it was to write *My Ireland,* it seems strange that it was only the publication of this book that seemed to give c me any recognition as a writer in these islands. Not that I had anything to complain of, for recognition enough had been generously given in America and other lands; though it is pleasant not to be thought a complete idler in one's own land, as one must be if one's principal occupation is ignored. Whether recognition is good for a writer or bad I do not know, and as his work is so far more important than his feelings it would be better if recognition, or the withholding of it, were to be meted out according to whether it is good for his work or not. Perhaps it is all ordered as it should be, and I have sometimes thought that the few poets who have been given recognition in their time have sometimes slapped down lines that they would have paused before writing if they had still a name to win. I do not say that some people had not read my *Curse Of The Wise Woman*; but they said very little about it until *My Ireland* came out. At the time that I was writing this book Sir William Rothenstein was bringing out a book of portraits with a brief description of some famous man on the page opposite each portrait, and he and Lady Allenby asked me to write the one for Lord Allenby, which I did. A fine bust was made of Lord Allenby shortly before he died by the

Austrian sculptor Strobl, and Lord Allenby asked me to have my bust done by him too, so I did, and these busts and several others were exhibited in London about 1936. To mention my own crude statuettes on the top of Mr. Strobl's brilliant work is no intended juxtaposition, but the mere freak of a wandering memory; indeed to put these two sentences side by side is a similar contrast to what there was at Colnaghi's when Miss Gwendolen Parnell's figures stood cheek by jowl with mine. But in the summer before I started to write *My Ireland,* before leaving London, I had another exhibition of these clay figures that I baked in my kitchen fire. This time the exhibition was at Wertheims in Burlington Gardens. I cannot find the programme of that exhibition now: it has gone into the dark of the past with the leaves of old autumns. But the figures were on the lines of the ones that were exhibited at Colnaghi's, though each one differed from the next as widely as possible, for it was my intention to show different characters. And that summer there was a show of living chess at Roehampton, a player from Kent playing one from Sussex with live pieces, girls from a London school who had been very well trained to know any move that would be required of them. I was playing for Kent, and I won, I think by superior wood-craft, for by bringing up a pawn behind a larger piece you may sometimes effect surprises at living chess such as the Indians used to effect in the woods of the West. But to return to the book I was writing for Messrs. Jarrold, I took it over to Ireland and finished it there on January 22nd, 1937. And on January 28th I wrote a Jorkens story, called "The Neapolitan Ice," that it rather amused me to write; Jorkens is given a wonderful liqueur by a man who wishes to do business with him, and it raises the spirit of Jorkens far up over London, and he flies over the green of England on a great journey, till his spirit comes to white lands covered with snow, and later he sees the wonderful Abendgluth and sees miles of snow turned pink in a glorious sunset, and the power of the marvellous liqueur abates, and Jorkens' spirit falls forward on to the snow and his lips are nearly frost-bitten. When it is objected in his club, where he tells the tale, that his body could not be frost-bitten from any adventure that might befall his spirit, Jorkens explains that after drinking the liqueur he had fallen forward over the table, and his lips were lying just in the middle of a Neapolitan ice, on the white part, with the pink part of it gleaming under his eyes.

On January 30th and 31st I wrote another Jorkens story, called the "Development of the Rillswood Estate," which told of the adventures of a

Victorian couple in the days when what was done and what was not done were far more important than now, and they find a satyr in their garden, who has come to eat their tulip-bulbs. They cannot easily get rid of him, and the trouble is that though many of the rules of behaviour in those days were unwritten, everyone knew and accepted them, and one unwritten law that nobody questioned was that you did not keep a satyr in your back garden. What happened when the great lady who owned the whole of the Rillswood estate came to call is the principal point of the story. And a few days later I wrote a tale for the B.B.C., which was a hint, though little more, against cruelty to animals. It told of a bird-fancier who disappears because a lady to whom he is no longer able to supply blackbirds has him taught singing at her own expense and, when he has become a good songster, traps him in a cage in a motor-van and takes him away to a lonely part of the country where, with perhaps some justice, she makes him sing to her. A day or two later I wrote a learned article on the "Possibility of Life upon the Third Planet," as overheard on a wireless set that happens to pick it up from a great distance. Since Earth is the third planet the article is a lecture being broadcast from a university on the planet Mars, and the lecturer is sceptical about there being life here, while another school argues from certain observations that if there is life on this planet it will probably soon destroy itself by the violence of its inventions. That was on February 12th. On February 14th I wrote a tale called "Old Emma," which tells of a master of hounds who breaks a collar-bone; and while having it set by a surgeon his heart stops beating, but is started again by massage. Thus he strays to Heaven and comes back. In Heaven he witnesses a march past, a review such as they have there every few thousand years in preparation for Armageddon. I describe some of the gorgeous panoplies and a corps of millions of angels led by a splendid seraph, whose huge cuirass is made of a single diamond. And the thought comes to the master of hounds, amid all this splendour, how an old housemaid who was kind to him as a child would have liked to see all this, for he considers that Old Emma, in spite of all her faults of education, would have quite a right to be in Heaven now. But he had somehow forgotten the text about the last being first, for, as the gleaming myriads approach, the splendid seraph who leads them says to him: "Why, Master Tom, you always was a one to be looking at soldiers."

I wrote some more stories and shot a good many snipe by the time the season was ended; and then I was asked by a paper whose owners are kind

to animals to write them an article against the export of tired old horses to slaughter-houses abroad. This I sat down to do, but, as I wrote, I warmed to the subject, and as there was a bill before Parliament to stop this trade, and as so many speeches had been made to say that the trade should continue, I argued that, if it was as good a trade as all that, it should be extended still further, and that old relatives that had been kind to us, but were grown too old or infirm to be longer useful, should be exported too, and usefully eaten in lands that had cannibal customs. I called this article "The Export of Aunts." But my indignation at the thought of the treatment of these poor old horses had grown too hot, and the editor had to refuse it, not feeling quite able to stand up to the protests that he was sure would be hurled at him on behalf of the aunts.

In April I wrote a preface for a book of poems by an Irish sportsman, Stanislas Lynch, and then we set out for London to attend the Coronation, but I got ill and went no further than a Nursing Home in Dublin. One night there I heard an explosion, and it seemed familiar to be in Dublin again and near the end of my tether, listening to a noise such as had been fairly continuous round Jervis Street Hospital in April 1916; but it was only some young men fighting a battle against George II, whose statue up to that time had been in Stephens Green. Irish nurses looked after me with great kindness, though I puzzled them by hearing whistles and other noises from a mews at the back, that they did not seem to hear: some while after, when I was recovered, I asked them to come to tea at our house, and as I showed them round the gardens one of them suddenly said, "Now I know what you meant by the noises in Dublin!" Here was silence, and she had never met it before, and, comparing it with the town, she knew now for the first time that the noises I heard were real.

In July, rightly or wrongly, Mr. Curtis Brown suggested to me that I should write an autobiography. I suppose I came to it by stages: first of all I wrote a book at somebody else's suggestion, *My Ireland*; and now I took the second step away from inspiration, which I still think the best source for art, to write at another's suggestion a book of sheer fact. And it came so easy, that I seem to have got the habit. In the book that I write today I can promise that the events yet to come will not be dull, but I cannot promise that they will not be commonplace, for by 1943 all adventure has come to be as common as fragments of shell, that were such romantic reminders of

earlier wars, but which from 1914 onwards became as plentiful as scrap iron, and therefore of little more value.

CHAPTER X

PEACE FLUTTERS HER WINGS

I RETURNED to shooting grouse and partridges with my friends in Yorkshire, and partridges with others in Kent, at Shoreham and Fawkham, and pheasants with other Kentish neighbours, the Normans at St. Clare, and throughout these pleasant occupations I continued, as time permitted, the book to which the last chapter alludes, and which I called *Patches of Sunlight* for it was made of such memories as endured of forty years; and, until this book was finished on December 10th, I wrote very little else, though I have a dim record of having made a few speeches, which I was sometimes asked to make at schools in Kent, for instance at Dover, Folkestone and Sevenoaks. When in Dover we stayed with Brigadier and Mrs. Howard, when he was commanding there, in the fine old castle among its moats; and a strangely wild bit of land its chief moat was, where nothing ever went except foxes, and Mrs. Howard's cairns that used to give them mild hunting exercise. In Sevenoaks I was asked to let my speech be printed for the school and of course I agreed, but on such occasions the art of a speaker has to lean on the art of the reporter, as the art of the dramatist leans on that of the actor; but in any case a speech read is not the same as a speech heard, even when a reporter has accomplished anything so difficult as complete accuracy. And I was asked by an association in Westerham to attend a dinner, which was to be followed by the usual speech. When accepting I asked the kind of people to whom I should have to speak, for the name of the Association did not quite describe them; and, without knowing quite what they were, I should not know what they expected me to be, or quite what sort of speech they wanted. For I have followed various avocations, and I like to know in what capacity I have been asked to speak anywhere. The answer was that they were simple minds. This entirely satisfied me, for I believe that all that is worth having in the world comes out of simplicity, and the man who adopts the air of being superior to it has nothing of any value in him. So away I went to Westerham. But the first person I met as I went into the room was one of the most intricate minds in England. A moderately intricate mind is needed even for finance or politics, and in all the arts, to a far lesser extent, and no doubt for several other

things; but for none of them is the intricacy needed that is required of a first-class chess-player, and one of the two or three best of these that there are in England, Mr. Winter, was the first person I met when I went to Westerham. It almost seemed that the description I had been given was not entirely accurate. However, I had time to rearrange my ideas during the dinner, and my speech went off all right.

In December we went back to Ireland, to eat various game for dinner for the rest of the winter. And the year 1938 came quietly in, to a world uneasily expectant, and still the sirens slept. I wrote little that winter except a few verses, which did not seem to have the depth of those that I, for one, wrote later; and surely everyone's verses must have something more in them now than they could have had in 1938. One of the poems I wrote that winter I called "The Good News From Ghent," and it explained from an examination of Browning's poem what the good news must have been: it must have been to tell the people of Aix that they were not really besieged, as they had supposed; otherwise Joris and Dirck and the other would not have got through. On March 3rd when the shooting season was over I started on a new play called *The Strange Lover.* It was about a mysterious man of great wealth, who turns out to be a magician, and who builds a palace for himself on a lonely Yorkshire moor. Rumour comes to a country house at the edge of the moor, rumour which Paterfamilias has heard at his club in York and which he confides to his wife, though it must not be repeated, that the stranger indulges in alchemy. It turns out however that his art runs deeper and darker than that, for he can artificially make man; and the story is mainly concerned with a young man in hunting kit who rides up to the house by the moor and meets the daughter of the couple that live there. She is attracted by the wonderful freshness of everything that he says, and he is attracted by her because she is the first girl he has ever seen. He is only two days old. Memories had been mesmerically given to him. I had had the idea for some time, but had found the ignorance that such a man must have of everything other men knew, including even language, to be an insuperable obstacle; and then it had struck me that he might have been given knowledge and memories as easily as he could be given flesh and blood out of wild animals snared on the moor. They become engaged, and the magician calls on the girl's father, with allusions to an allowance for the boy that "shall be boundless." So the squire suggests five thousand a year, which rather insults the magician, who mentions a hundred and fifty

thousand a year and asks that this rather sordid topic shall be discussed no further. When the girl's father quite recovers he asks some question as to how this vast sum will be paid, and the Professor, that is to say the magician, looking out of the window, says, "I see you have some farm buildings. You probably have a good farm cart."

"Oh, yes," says the squire.

"Then," says the Professor, "if you will send it up to the moor once a quarter, the money shall be paid in gold."

Other scenes show the house on the moor, with the Professor in tidy evening dress, and his humble assistant dressed much as Tenniel might have dressed a magician, and nuggets of gold, or rather boulders of it, are lying about on the floor. The shadows of tragedy begin to intrude: the Professor's marvellous creation does not seem well, indeed he plaintively asks the Professor for death, which he has seen among the creatures on the moor and which he envies them. That there has been some mistake in the brewing of this boy is barely hinted by the assistant magician, but he is quieted by the Professor's words: "If I can err, how came you to be alive when the grave closed green over your generation?" At this point I will leave the play to speak for itself some day upon some boards, or rather I will leave some future actors to speak for it. Not that it has not been acted and very well done, but very briefly. It was accepted by a manager in America, I forget who now, but it was never put on there. But my nephew. Lord Longford, read an announcement that it was to be performed, and asked if he might put it on with his Players in Dublin. I was delighted with his offer, and it was duly performed and was a very considerable success. Mr. Robert Hennessy in the part of the magician was particularly good, and when I had to make the usual speech at the first performance I remembered a critique that I had once read of Miss Marda Vanne in my play *If,* and said that I did not know what occupation Mr. Hennessy followed when off the stage; but, before I was able to suggest a possible reason for his making so perfect a magician, the audience got the point and their laughter ended the sentence.

I only worked three days in March at this play and put it aside for a while, finishing it in sixteen days more during May and June in London and Kent. That March I was asked to review a book for the Dublin Broadcasting Station, not a new book, but any book, classic or otherwise. I selected Tolstoy's *War and Peace,* which I do not think was being very much read then by anybody, and I stated my opinion, which I have held ever since the

wonderful experience of first meeting that book in 1908, that it was incomparably the greatest novel ever written.

In this year I had the experience, always delightful, of discovering a new writer, or so I hoped; but the adventurous life from which the tales were taken raw, as they actually happened, had already been amply lived and only a year was left to it. This new writer that I hoped we were all to read was Sir Terence Keyes, and I have seldom read more exciting stories. That was not quite the view that editors took, and his work was not immediately accepted by them, and I learned from that that raw gold has not the welcome that the market gives to little ornaments that are fabricated from it; in other words it seems that in a story of adventure the adventures should come just in their right places, where fiction alone can place them, and not just anywhere, wherever truth may have happened to fling them down. But I did not know that then; and, knowing no one who had lived a more adventurous life than Sir Terence Keyes, I thought that no one would be able to write more exciting tales than he did. And for that matter I still do not know anybody who does. One of the tales, I remember, began with the words that a certain government "had very rightly imposed the death-penalty for any dealing in foreign exchange." And the story goes on to describe how he happened to be walking in that country's capital with £60,000 worth of English notes in the pocket of an old Burberry. The tale is called "The Old Burberry." He did not say what he was doing with £60,000, but he told how he was arrested in the street with the money on him, and the story of how he escaped with his life made good reading. I was able to get him an appointment to read some of these tales from Broadcasting House, but before this could be done his life had run its course. I still hope that these tales will be published, as well as more tales of his adventures, which Lady Keyes (his widow) is writing; for, even if this generation is tired of adventures, its children will probably be greedy for them; and that book will contain plenty.

I went again to the microphone in May of that year, 1938, when I talked from Broadcasting House on the subject of "Dead Metaphors." Our language is littered with these, that is to say with elucidations of something that one is saying by comparing it, to make it quite clear, with something that neither speaker nor hearer understands, whatever their great-grandfathers may have done. I pointed out for instance that people will call a race the Blue Riband of the Turf without in the least knowing what the

blue riband is, to somebody who does not know either. And somebody who never goes to races will say, to someone who may even think racing wrong, that somebody is winning a game of lawn tennis “hands down”; while few people seem able to liken extreme consternation to anything more dreadful than the arrival of one solitary, obsolete shell of the type that was called a bombshell. I suggested that some of these dead things should be tidied up, as a housemaid would remove a dead mouse, and I likened myself to a charwoman coming to Broadcasting House to clear the language of some of these things, and then admitted that I could not do it, because they had become stuck to the floor, or had rotted into the language. In September I was asked to talk again on this subject, so I gave them some more.

And this July I went to Alexandra Palace to be televised and to read some of my poems. Television will soon be a commonplace to my readers, but it was fairly new then. Indeed it seems to me that a severe blow will soon be dealt to the theatre that we know now, for without an arm-chair and a fireplace how will it compete with the radio, when an audience can see the actors, as well as hear them, by their own firesides?

I remember the great city lying spread before me on that high ground. After I had read my poems I went to the waiting-room to see what other people were about to be similarly honoured, and to see exactly what kind of people it was that the public so much wanted to see: I saw two chimpanzees, a wallaby and a wombat; and, with the jealousy that there so often is amongst those who come before the public, one of the chimpanzees made a grab at my glasses.

That summer we went to stay with my wife’s cousin, Lady Doris Blacker, in Sussex. I remember her husband, who was a brigadier, assuring us that the only unit that was then fully armed and equipped on a war-footing was the King’s Scottish Archers. This military secret must have been fully known to the Germans. And what disappointments there were in store for them! From this pleasant party we motored back to London, and stopped on the way at Worplesdon at the wonderful house of Mr and Mrs. Sime. It had been a public-house once, the Crown Inn, and Sime had bought it and now called it the Old Crown Inn. It had a small garden sloping steeply down to it, and a kitchen garden behind. Sime had had the interior of the house rearranged, so that one room went from ground to roof in the greater part of the house. There must have been also a kitchen, and one small bedroom above it, but these we did not see. The sunny room, with

windows on two sides, was ornamented with a few Japanese prints and a few objects of art that Mr and Mrs. Sime had collected, which were sufficient to give to the room that strange and indefinable enchantment which only comes to rooms that someone has loved, and which someone has furnished with ornaments because that person liked them. No other reason will bring content to the Lares and Penates which, according to the old Romans, watch over a house. Those Lares and Penates do not know what "the correct period" is, or care a damn for it; though damn is rather too big a word for such little gods. When a couple have ornamented a room to please themselves, their pleasure is felt by the Lares and the Penates, whose smile illuminates the house for all of that couple's lives, and for so long afterwards as nothing too incongruous shall be allowed to dissipate the serene glow of their smile. In such a room lived Mr and Mrs. Sime.

Sime's working room was at the other end of the garden, in what had once been the stables, with one wall on the road, a wall that both political agents had sought at election time, and Sime had exactly divided it with a chalk line and allowed them each to have half. This room was littered deep with Sime's drawings, and a good number of struck matches, and was rather like the great cupboard of a magician in which he kept his wand and the ingredients of his spells, than like any chamber that those spells had actually enchanted. Some of the most wonderful drawings in black and white that have been done in our time anywhere in the world were in that room, but its dominant note was untidiness, very different from the room in which Mrs. Sime entertained us. And there I saw Sime for the last time, for the sands of those quiet days were running out, and two years later I had a letter from him telling me that he was near his end, and telling it almost casually, as though it were nothing to worry about. I wrote then to someone who I thought might be able to move the wheels of Britannia's ponderous chariot sufficiently to bring Sime the small pension from the Civil List, that I thought the country owed him and might be glad to pay while there was time. He wrote back saying that he was sorry to hear that Sime was "dying a little quicker than the rest of us," for it was at the height of the Battle of Britain, and promising to do what he could; but Sime died before anything was done. He was a man of a glowing humour and vast intellect and, besides that, at least in my opinion, the greatest black-and-white artist of the age.

I was asked that summer by my literary agent to do some articles for the *Daily Mail.* And I wrote a few, merely describing the countryside as it was each week in July and for a week or two of August. Not all of these were printed, for if one did not hit off the right day for publication these little sketches of the countryside, that changed with the world's journey, very soon became out of date. And I wrote a few more Jorkens stories. One of them, of which I wrote nearly five thousand words on July 2nd and completed with another thousand on July 3rd was largely about Greece, a country that I had never seen or ever expected to see, yet a strange chance was to bring me there, and in only two more years. It tells how Jorkens meets Pan in Greece, very down at heel if one can use such a phrase of a god, and how he brings him to London, and what a nuisance Pan is to him there, and I end with that hint of corroboration that I like to put into a Jorkens tale. This story was published in the *Windsor Magazine,* and, translated, in a French paper. The *Revue des Deux Mondes* had at some time previously given about thirty pages to my work and, though not much of mine had been translated into French and though I think my tales and plays were very little known in France, yet I felt they were now beginning to be; I felt like a man walking into a beautiful country that was new to him, but not knowing that the avalanche and the earthquake were already preparing under the flowery slopes.

Early that August my play *Alexander* was given at the Malvern Festival, with Mr. Donald Wolfitt in the principal part, and had a great success. For a few days at Malvern I lived the life of a writer, then I returned to Ireland to my shooting; and I had a day in Dublin, when Alekhine came there to give a remarkable display of simultaneous chess. I am President of the Irish Chess Association and was asked to take a board against him. I had a long game, but it ended as games against Alekhine usually do end, and the world-champion easily beat me.

And soon afterwards we went to Yorkshire, where I shot the last grouse I have shot at Arden and the last partridges I have shot at Helperby, for those days with their pleasant parties were drawing near the abyss. Indeed so near were they that the edge was crumbling even then, and the days and the ways we knew seemed about to slip down into it. We were at Arden when we heard Chamberlain's sad and sincere voice evidently despairing of peace. And next day, like a miracle, came the news that the calamity was averted. It had been heard unexpectedly on the wireless, and we were told, as I

described in a verse at the time, for such news seemed worthy of verse, especially when we could not know how short the respite was:

THE NEWS

On to the lawn one sad September day,
The evening in your golden hair, you came
To tell the news, for you had heard one say
That Europe should not end in blood and flame.

That was on September 28th; and on September 27th, when peace seemed lost, I had written this sonnet:

THE WANDERERS

Now over roofs of barns new filled with corn
Oar guests, that lately through the evening light
Darted and curved, are missing from our sight,
And all their little homes appear forlorn.
They were among us only yester morn.
And now by hidden pathways of the night
They seek a land where morning is more bright
Than on the English eaves where they were born.
But who is this that stands with flickering wing,
With gaze averted, watching the last swallow,
And seeming momently about to follow,
Leaving the land she loved, soon wandering
For weary years until the fury cease?
Alas for us and all men! She is Peace.

CHAPTER XI

THE RAGE OF MISS NANCY PRICE

ONE day I met Miss Nancy Price in Sloane Street as I was walking home to Cadogan Square, and she asked me to write a letter to one of the papers against cruelty to animals. I have often written letters to the papers, but nearly always had the sense to refrain from posting them, and I was reluctant to do it. Miss Nancy Price was raging, for she had seen a case of cruelty to rabbits, and no milder word will describe the effect that such cruelties always have on her; and to make it worse it had occurred on the Sussex downs which she loves. She came to our house with me, and gradually I became infected with her fury, so that I wrote not a letter, but a poem, and some of the indignation that I caught from her may be seen in the last verse, though all were equally violent:

Sometimes I think an angry dawn
Leaps up in Heaven against men,
As though a sword were partly drawn
To end the nations there and then.

I suppose I had intended to make my point with a bit of an exaggeration; but, reading it now, it does not seem so much of an exaggeration as it did.

About that time, I think the same day, I attended the annual dinner of the Shakespear Reading Society, of which I succeeded Sir Johnstone Forbes-Robertson as president, and Miss Nancy Price and Mr. Walter de la Mare were there as distinguished guests. When I asked Mr de la Mare to come he exacted the rather unusual condition that he would not have to make a speech; but we were glad to get him even on those terms. I was not able to remain silent; and, though what I had to tell them was mainly negative, I expressed my convictions when I said that we know nothing about the mind of Shakespear, except that it was like a clear lake under a bright dawn, reflecting all things that might chance to pass or lie round it; that he was the perfect dramatist, deeply feeling the emotions of each character in any of his plays as it came upon the stage, so that under that character's words lay the real sincere feelings that it was proper for that character to have. But of

Shakespear's private opinions, if he had any, and his views about politics, religion or anything else, I said that we know nothing. Nothing, unless perhaps at the end of the last play a personal longing gleams through the words of Prospero, a longing to give up writing plays and to rest.

I wrote some more tales, poems and articles, and went back to Ireland and to shooting our dinner, and the ominous year came in and still the sirens slept. In February I wrote an article calling attention, or trying to call it, to a real need, the need of an association to protect dead poets from misquotation, and as such an association would often have idle hours I suggested that it should also undertake some similar work, such as the prevention of the desecration of graves. I called my article "Improving the Poets," and I gave nine examples of glaring improvements undertaken by whimsical printers. Would any printer permit a labourer from the street to come in and interfere with his skilled work? Why then should he ever intrude *his* unskilled labour amongst the work of a poet. My article showed two cases of dignitaries of the Church, well-educated men needing no instruction from me, but perfectly helpless in the hands of some printer throwing down a query-mark meaninglessly in the middle of a sentence, to be left there for ever. This was printed in *John o' London's Weekly* on June 9th, 1939, and probably several people read it, and can hardly have disagreed that those nine improvements were blemishes; but there is a certain inertia that weighs on the world, as imperceptibly as the air, and yet exerting vast pressure on every square foot, and I do not dream that my article availed to do aught against it. But that inertia broods over far greater evils than this, and under its influence, so beneficent to them, they thrive as the malarial mosquito thrives in the mist of the marshes. In London, a few weeks earlier than the time that I wrote this article, I was asked to speak at King's College in London University, and instead of speaking of poetry, or other of man's treasuries, I talked for a change about some of our principal follies. I instanced a machine whose sole purpose is to remove all nutriment from rice. This makes the rice very white to look at, though why white should be any better than pink or green, God knows; and it also causes the disease of beri-beri, which among those who only eat rice kills thousands. And there had been some very interesting articles in *The Times,* describing a great journey in tropical Asia, when the porters died one by one, not from the rigours of nature, but solely from the work of this deadly machine. One student, an Indian, asked me, when I had finished, if I knew that unpolished

rice was brown and dirty. I asked him if he knew what beri-beri was, and received the astonishing answer: “Certainly I do. Many members of my family suffered from it.”

There was no more to be said.

It is terrible to think of that machine quietly grinding out death, and to fear that the vast power of that inertia is greater than the power of any words one can use. If there was anything to be said for the machine some controversy might arise and the inertia might be overthrown. But there is nothing to be said for it; no doctor in all the world would speak for it; and it is only there to make rice look white in shop-windows.

For six days in March 1937 and two days in January 1938 I had worked on the first four chapters of a novel, to which I now returned, doing two more days on it in February 1939; and on March 3rd I at last settled down to it and, barring an occasional broadcast, wrote nothing else until I finished it on April 27th three days after our return to London. This novel I called *The Story of Mona Sheehy,* and it was published that autumn by Messrs. Heinemann, just as the era of which it told was swept away by one of those tides of war that do at certain times sweep over continents, and which President Wilson invented a scheme to stop, as King Canute with another tide had done before him. But my novel told of Ireland, where it is not admitted that anything much has happened; at any rate nothing requiring one to take sides, or to do anything about.

When I said that I finished *The Story of Mona Sheehy* on April 27th, I should have said that I finished the last chapter of it, chapter 38; but chapter 32 I left till May 6th, for it tells of a motor-race and, though one can imagine things that one has not seen, I do not think one could tell of a motor-race if one had never witnessed one. Such a description would not be honest, and anyone describing such a race who had never seen one would throw in heaps of words instead of scenes. I can give an example of this style: in 1914, just after war had started, some paper, feeling that it must be topical, had stories about the war, in one of which I read the words, “the great cruiser sank like a stricken bull under the crowning mercy of the final stroke.” I don’t think that one single word of that means anything: I have heard of something similar being found in architecture, where a house had been burnt and a part of it, previously hidden, was seen to be a heap of broken bricks thrown in anyhow. The bull and the crowning mercy, and all the rest of it, are like those bricks. So before presuming to say what a racing

motor was like, I went to see one, and the secretary of the Brooklands track with the greatest kindness sent me tickets for it. We went to see the race, and it was an entirely new experience: motors moved in the landscape faster than I had seen anything move in a landscape before: here was speed on an entirely new scale, and a train that came by at the time seemed quaintly antique. I had known that part of the country when it was all woods, but the change from hazels to asphalt seemed no stranger than this new speed.

And some time that summer I played another game of living chess, this time against Elaine Sanders, who was then somewhere about fourteen, but a Kentish player of considerable repute, and lady chess-champion of England. And she beat me. Of course the Press was there, but I was also interviewed about the game afterwards at my home in Kent and my interviewer let out that the game had gone the way that the world, or at any rate the Press, wanted. But after telling me that, he gave me every chance to get even by asking me questions about what I would do to Miss Elaine Sanders if I met her over an ordinary chess-board. But I missed the opportunity that would have been so welcome to a champion wrestler or prize-fighter. For I had lost the game, and there was an end of it. —

Back in Cadogan Square that June we heard the sirens muttering in their sleep, for practices and preparations were being made. For the first time we heard that wailing noise with which the world is familiar, and the long and lovely note of All Clear.

CHAPTER XII

THE DARKEST HOUR

Heard the heavens fill with shouting, and there rained a ghastly dew From the nations' airy navies grappling in the central blue.

TENNYSON.

WE went to Ireland in July 1939, and my son and his wife were with us, for he had leave from India. It was a peaceful summer, the last peaceful summer that the world has seen. I wrote an article called "Temperament" for *Good Housekeeping,* with examples of temperamental absurdities such as are sometimes recorded about writers, musicians and prima donnas for the amusement of the public; only, as it was a writer writing this article, I did not choose my whimsical freaks from the things that writers or other artists did, but from the madder flights of the public. I mentioned that a bill had to be brought into Parliament to prevent people cutting off horses' tails, that shades for electric lights were usually put on the far side of the light instead of the near side, and, maddest of all, that gun-makers deliberately make the backsights of rifles shiny, not of course for military rifles, because no army in the world would be silly enough to allow it, but for nearly all the others. Believing that the public take a mild interest in the eccentricities of genius, I ended by saying that it might amuse them to know that there are probably few so humble or so obscure that they have not inextricably woven about their heart-strings some temperamental eccentricity well worthy of the most exacting prima donna that ever enraged a manager. And I wrote a good many stories at the end of that summer, finishing with a fairly long one that I called "The Ivory Poacher," which told of the Bahr el Gazai, and reaches of the White Nile that I hardly expected ever to visit again.

I have made three discoveries of writers in my life, and a fascinating experience it is for any man to make a discovery in the field in which he is interested, whether it is a new fossil found by a geologist, an unknown butterfly caught by a collector of lepidoptera, or an unread poet whose manuscript meets the eye of one who cares for such things. In a sense all one's readings out of school are discoveries, and in a sense one discovers

Shakespear and Milton and Shelley for oneself, and very thrilling such discoveries can be; but they are like mountains already named. And I have always held that one has not the right to claim even to have seen the splendour of Shakespear or Milton, let alone discovered it, unless one can respond to a certain test. The test is like the test that one might apply to a jeweller, which is not whether he can tell a diamond set in a ring, but whether he can identify one lying on the ground in Africa. So, I think that a man deserves to be believed, when he says that he thinks Keats is a good poet, only if he recognizes poetry when it comes before him signed by some name unknown. The best poetry of the latter half of the twentieth century has the same right to be recognized, as soon as it is written, as the poetry of the later nineteenth century.

In the summer of 1913 Francis Ledwidge wrote to me sending me his earlier verse; only this year while on a visit I saw a neglected and forgotten book by a poet whose name is not recognized yet; and in August 1939 an American lady, Mrs. Bird, showed me a tale by Mary Lavin, whose father runs an estate not far from here which belongs to Mr and Mrs. Bird. These are my three discoveries. The first I hope is well enough known, the second I hope will be, and the third is now beginning to make a name that may need no explanation by the time this book is published. I wrote a preface at this time for Miss Lavin's first book, and I was a long way from home when it came to be required in 1941, but a copy of it was able to be discovered here, and it was printed without any errors of typist or printer, though there is one thing in it that is incorrect, and that is where it is suggested that a paragraph from a tale called "The Green Grave and the Black Grave" should be compared with any paragraph from any other novel of this century. The tale for which I uttered this challenge on behalf of Miss Mary Lavin was a tale called "A Nun's Mother": it was not a particularly interesting story, but it was told with a vividness that seemed to me something new in literature: the characters in it, and the little things that they did, were seen with the vivid clearness with which one sees those brilliant fishes swimming in illuminated water that they have in the Zoo in London. But the American publisher was not quite sure whether one ought to write about nuns' mothers, or at any rate whether one should flood their lives with such a vivid light. And so that story was left out, and the claim that I made on behalf of it was transferred to another story, the least good in the book. It was not lack of literary judgment that made the publisher pick

the weakest story as a substitute for the best, for a traveller going by paths travels further than one who has to make his way through untrodden forest, because the beaten track makes it easier; and the path along which Mary Lavin went when she wrote "The Green Grave and the Black Grave" had been trodden for her by Synge. As I said to her at the time, "Half the people writing Irish stories write Synge and water. In this story you have written Synge and whiskey." For though the brilliant art of Mary Lavin had made a good tale of it, there was a distinct flavour of Synge. In no other stories of hers have I detected any influence besides what she herself got direct from the countryside and the people in it, whose movements she watches with such a piercing eye; except that, though born in America, and purely Irish by ancestry and residence, her spirit rather seems to have come from Russia.

And then Hitler started his war, and our son had immediately to return to India. He said goodbye to us and his wife and went to Scotland, to go from there to an unknown destination. A Canadian ship carried him, and he wrote to us on its notepaper, which was adorned with a picture of a very large Canadian hotel. He marked a cross on one of its hundred windows, and wrote underneath "This is my room," but gave us no more accurate information than that as to where he was going. But it was to India, and most strangely I found myself in the war a while before he got into it. On September 10th his son was born, whom he has never yet seen.

Looking at things that I wrote in those days I see a faith in victory that almost seems to have been too lightly come by, based as it was upon ignorance of so much that has happened to us since. And yet we all had that faith, and was it not that that brought us all the way, till we see victory as clear as we see it now, not yet face to face, as I write in November of 1943, but very close? The inspiration of the war, the heightening of the temperature of humanity, reached as far as Ireland, though faintly. But I wrote nothing with much depth in it till the spring of 1940: not till there seemed some need of it did I write any poetry that could have stirred anybody, or could have possibly assisted anyone to endure. But I do believe that poetry can have some such effects; for, if the object of a barrage of artillery is to awe as well as to crush, and if the bombing of cities is designed to depress the inhabitants until they be driven to surrender, such things as poetry and music may attempt the opposite effect; and though either may fail, either may succeed. I need not have mentioned music, for

all the armies in the world recognize the value of it, but poetry can help too. And so I wrote a good many poems as the war grew worse, and I probably could not have gone on doing that much longer without getting into it, nor are people likely to have listened to me if I had, but I wrote poems all through the spring. Before my poems took any graver turn, before any possibility of invasion had dawned on most of us, I wrote another play for the B.B.C., a play called *Aurora Borealis*. It was about some British officers in a German prison who were invited to broadcast for the Germans, but in order to save the life of one of them, who had been condemned to death for infringing a German rule. They all refuse, and the condemned officer is left looking at his last sunset. There is a queer black spot on the sun, and later an extraordinarily fine display of the Aurora Borealis. Then one officer agrees to go to the microphone to praise Hitler, and the young officer's life is spared. Then none of the other officers will speak to the one who broadcast, not even the one he has saved, who explains to him that he is too unpatriotic. "No," says the other, "it is you who are too damned unscientific. With such an Aurora Borealis, and a sunspot that size, there can be no reception. Not a human being will hear what I have said, unless you count that German as human." Curiously enough, when we heard this play several weeks later in a cellar in Kent, it very realistically did go off the air, but not for the reason given in the play, for it was the Germans that lit up the sky that night and not the Aurora Borealis.

Things took a more serious turn, and I wrote a poem called "Victory," which went as follows:

Black as thunder grows the night:
Now I sing of dawn and light.
Lost are battles, crushed the free:
Let us look to Victory;
Victory that like a star,
Very faint and very far,
Yet will shine to show the way
And will not fade until the day.

This was published, as many of mine were at this time, by the *Daily Sketch*. And a few days later I wrote one called "The Darkest Hour," and I

began to make arrangements to go to Kent to join the L.D.V., as what is now the Home Guard was called. This was the poem:

Now are we at the very darkest hour,
And in the darkness we are all alone,
The last of all our allies lying prone.
But now we know no blacker cloud can lour,
And now, remembering our ancient power,
We wait whatever may be sailed or flown,
With all our kith but one, like ramps of stone
Leaning against an age-enduring tower.

And in that tower, like a frightened maid,
Liberty shelters, and at times she sings
Old songs of freedom learned in many lands.
She is immortal, and our tower stands
From times as dark as these, when dreadful things
Died at its gates. She need not be afraid.

I don't suppose there was anyone in England then who needed to be reminded that we should win, but there was no harm in reminding them. I sent the poem to the *Evening Standard* and they kindly printed it, but any effect I may have hoped it would have upon people's spirits was rather erased by the printing underneath it of my address in Ireland. Not that the address was not perfectly accurate, for it took longer to evacuate evacuees from my house in Kent and get enrolled in the L.D.V. and get permits to travel to England, than it did for the poem to be printed, so that I was actually in Ireland on the day it appeared, but that address must have made my poem look something more hypothetical than an expression of faith, and too remote for a prophecy. Meanwhile Hitler was publicly stating that he was going to be in London on August 15th. My house in Kent is on the way, and I only managed to get everything arranged and all the permits ready by August 13th. It was indeed an odd war, for I could not go to it without my cook, and she could not work without a kitchen-maid, and we were also taking two other maids. But on the very last day before we started there was an outburst of tears in the kitchen, and nobody but our cook was willing to come with us. Nothing however was able to divert her, either then or later,

though she once remarked during the Battle of Britain that if she wasn't deaf she didn't think she could stand it; but fortified by this curious safeguard she stood it very well indeed.

That summer, before we left, I was accorded by Dublin University a recognition of my work that was most welcome to me, for they kindly made me an honorary Doctor of Letters, or, in the language that they speak on such occasions, a Litt.D. I had then been working for thirty-five years, and was very glad to receive this acknowledgement of it from a public body in the British Isles. As the author of The Lost Chord hoped to hear his tune again in Heaven, so I have no doubt that there they have more glorious robes than those of a Litt.D. of Dublin University, but its bright scarlet with the brilliant blue of the hood is unlikely to be much outshone here. The Vice-Chancellor said a few words to me in the fine hall of Trinity College, and the public orator said some kind things about my work, but I will not repeat here anything of what was said, for it was entirely in Latin.

On August 12th I shot some ducks on the Boyne, and on the following day we set out from Kingstown to see how far Hitler had got. The ship's zigzags were the very first sign I had seen, as yet, that there was any war at all. Two of my three big-game rifles were fortunately with my gunmaker in London, one being with my son in India. I had begun to think that I might take them out no more, but at last I was setting out for big-game-shooting again, this time to Kent. The lightest of the two I kept for myself, and the other I gave to another Home Guard, as well as a Winchester repeater which I was fortunately able to acquire on the way in the following manner. I noticed on board the mail-boat a man walking with a stiff knee, and as awkwardly as though the malady had been very recently come by, and there was something in his eye that made me think he was worried as well as lame. I hate prying, but as he sat down near me I decided that he had a wooden leg, and could not help wondering how he got it, for a wooden leg is often the end of some romantic story. Then his ankle moved, quite nimbly, and putting two and two together, it suddenly struck me how useful to me might be what appeared to be such an uneasy burden to him, and I said to him "I will buy that rifle."

"What rifle?" he said.

"I'll give you a fair price for it," I said; and, as his face seemed still to demand an answer to his question, I added: "The one that is on your mind. And on your leg."

After that it was just two Irishmen settling a price between them, which we very soon did, for he was evidently uneasy about the rifle and I was anxious to get it. I never enquired what bit of a war he was setting out for, or even told him what I wanted to do with the rifle. It was a Winchester, as I have said, and took ten.450 bullets; and the stock, which he handed me from out of his greatcoat pocket when he gave me the rest of the rifle, had been neatly sawn off. I now had three good rifles as well as an old service revolver, which my gunmaker also kept for me, and I hoped that, as things were in England then, I brought something with me to the L.D.V. which might help to counterbalance the slowness of limbs growing elderly. I did up the rifle and stock in brown paper and declared the rifle at the customs at Holyhead, for I was not going to smuggle it. The customs officer, rather regretfully as I thought, asked me if it was really a rifle, and, when I repeated that it was, he had no alternative but to go with me to the chief customs officer, who told me that the rifle would have to go to the King's Warehouse in Holyhead. I explained that it was in Kent that the King wanted that rifle just then; and every consideration was shown me, but the fact remained that in that hour of sorest need for every good rifle, and indeed every firearm of any sort, that could be found, I had to fill in forms which resulted in a delay of a month before that rifle arrived where it was so much wanted, a few miles to the south-east of London. They were very ready to help me, but there seemed no way of doing it any quicker.

We found London entirely at peace, and my wife and I went down to our house in Kent in a hired bus with our cook and our chauffeur, where our housemaid had everything ready for us. The drive down from London was also perfectly peaceful.

Next day the sirens went, and there was a roar in the air, and our forces and those of the Germans met overhead. Twice there came out of the sky a noise that was perhaps the most noticeable of all the noises of the Battle of Britain, for the detonation of bombs is rather a feeling than a noise, the scream of a plane that has been shot down: one of them was a German and fell some distance away, and the other was one of ours, whose pilot made some sort of a landing in a neighbouring farm, and apologized to the farmer for having torn up part of his field. In that farm was a qualified nurse, who ran out and, seeing that the pilot was wounded in the face, bandaged him in the correct way, but he looked at himself in the glass and, saying "I can't go back looking like this," tore all the bandages off again. From time to time

every door in my house slammed, whether it was already shut or not. I sat in the verandah with my rifle, till I felt rather foolish, realizing that with my little mauser I could take no part in this battle of giants.

On Sunday we went to church, where we heard the drone of the bombers mingling with the notes of the organ; and, meeting some of our neighbours as we came away, I asked if that battle was about the size of the battles they usually had there, for I had never seen before any battle in the sky large enough to provide me with a scale by which to judge this one. And the neighbour told me that was their very first. So we had arrived in time, though with only one day to spare; and I would not, for much, have missed sharing this experience with my neighbours in Shoreham.

CHAPTER XIII

SOME MINOR TACTICS

For War a new and dreadful language spoke,
Never by ancient warrior heard or known;
Light'ning and smoke her breath, and thunder was her tone.
SCOTT.

THE only object in writing a biography is to record the truth, or such bits of it as one can remember. If one does not wish to do that one leaves mere dull fact altogether and writes fiction, which is so much better suited to the pen. Yet I regret to inform the reader that in the account of my purchase of a Winchester rifle in the last chapter I had to call fiction to my aid; for just there it is as though facts had grown too strong and violent and might have risen up and hit the man from whom I acquired the rifle. I therefore had to turn my back on them and walk a little away, leaving them dim and confused, and partially concealed by bits of fiction that I had to insert amongst them, in order to protect the man with the rifle down his trouser-leg from people who, for all I know, might still think it their business to get on to his cold scent. But everything I said about the rifle since its arrival at Holyhead is perfectly true.

The day before we left Ireland I wrote a poem which needs no explanation. It gives one reason for my journey, and so I reproduce it here.

THE GATE OF HORN.

A dreamy isle has sheltered me,
But I can write from there
No song to welcome Victory
When her wings thrill the air,
When to our army or our fleet
She comes, or like a star
Above the thunder and the sleet,
Shines where our airmen are.

I cannot in that pleasant isle
Of mead and marsh and lake
And dreams of old kings dead long while
Write of a world awake.

And so to Kent I set my face,
Across whose narrow seas
The enemy has put in place
Rows of realities.

For the rest of that summer and early autumn we had two or three battles a day over our valley. My platoon commander was Sir Herbert Cohen, an old friend, and our Commanding Officer was Colonel Hadow, or he was at any rate the senior officer of our lot of L.D.V. on that side of Sevenoaks. Of course we all noticed in those days that Hitler was unpunctual, and we may have known that he was a liar, but I don't think any of us doubted that he was coming. I had plenty of time to think about things during many delays in Ireland, and I had a far clearer view of what I had supposed was coming than I have had of any other war. I was not right, for the invasion never came, and if it had come it would probably have been very different from what I had imagined, and yet I believe it is a good thing to have a clear picture of the future in one's mind: if things happen as you think, you have obviously an enormous advantage; and, even when they don't, I believe it is better for the future to have appeared visible to you than for it to look all vague; at least one has confidence that way, and, provided that one is not too certain that one must be right, it does not turn to pigheadedness. I was no armchair strategist, because I never got as far as strategy, but only concerned myself with minor tactics, and with the possible adventures of a small platoon in a wood. My minor tactics went no further than this, that the enemy would probably land on open ground, and would attack London: our downs were about the last bit of open rural England before London began; therefore it seemed to me that they were just the place for Hitler, or rather Goering, and that it would be an easy march to London for him if he landed there. Of course it was not my business to have any views at all, but it seemed to me that against an enemy better trained and better armed we should make the utmost use of our one advantage, which was knowledge of

the ground, and the particular feature that we had in that part of Kent was the thin woods that we call shaws. If the enemy landed to the London side of us I imagined that we should not be much interested, but if he came down to the east of us I imagined he would move straight on London, and that we should be able to wait in the shaws on the way by which he would go. I never imagined an attack after the leaves should have fallen, and no doubt the Germans intended to come before then. My simple plans went no further than that, except for one more, which was never to fire at much over fifty yards. Some among us had shotguns, and I could not imagine a much greater solace, if one was being fired at with rifles, than to know that the faces of the men who were firing at you were being spattered at short range with small shot. This was my dream, and it was very unlike reality, as usually happens in war. Instead of shooting at Germans who could not see us, we got bombs from planes against which we could do nothing, and if I sometimes wrote to my shooting friends to tell them that I had the finest shooting in Europe, I had to admit that the game was all out of shot.

Colonel Hadow came over to see us, and I remember how extremely clearly he put the whole situation. I had at that time been unable to get the right kind of bullet for my rifle, and the ones that I had were the wrong kind. But the Germans had just declared the L.D.V. to be an illegal force, so I said that, if that was their view, it no longer seemed so much to matter what kind of cartridges might be found on one if one were taken prisoner.

"O don't worry about being taken prisoner," said Colonel Hadow. "They are not coming to take prisoners. They are coming to massacre men, women and children."

This view was not only clear, but perfectly accurate, as has been shown by their campaign in Russia.

I went up our hill with Colonel Hadow to show him the wide open country beyond it, which I had fondly selected as Goering's landing-ground. I think I chose quite a good place for him, and plenty of things landed there, but not a German army. There are dells in that land now which used not to be there, unless they have lately filled them in or made dew-ponds of them. I remember the sunlight that day shining on the sandy soil of that rather wild land on the top of the hills of chalk, and a great many tracks of pigs that ran about over a farm; and something in the sunlight and the strange tracks and the rough soil, and Colonel Hadow's uniform, set my thoughts wandering eastwards, whither my body had not been for ten years, and

whither I scarcely thought to go again. Strange that in less than a year I was to see many wild lands. Some months later, looking at the tracks of barefooted men in the sunny dust of Africa, I remembered this scene and the wandering fancy that had suddenly flashed from it. On this hill there lived a man in a lonely farm and we thought he would make a good scout, if we could have him fitted up with a telephone; and I lent him a pair of binoculars. Whether he ever saw anything I don't know, but he certainly heard things.

I will leave these words as I wrote them, though since I wrote them that house has tragically disappeared.

CHAPTER XIV

THE BATTLE OF BRITAIN

A sunset at night Is the shepherd's delight.
But a sunset in the morning
Is the shepherd's warning.

A MISQUOTATION.

I WRITE of a time and an experience so well known to nearly all, that I wonder what I can say of it. To all of us it seems so commonplace. Yet if we all wrote down the little things we remember in these years, there is no doubt that fragments of a great achievement would be found when our age has been wrecked on the shores of time, for some historian to gather and piece together. Even some bit of plaster from a shattered house, which the dustmen of County Councils have failed to tidy, some melancholy thing from which we turn our eyes, will shine with some glow of romance if it ever comes to the eyes of the folk of a calmer age. On the chance that a copy of this book may stray, like some such bit of plaster, before the eyes of people who sit down to dinner without any threat of death coming fairly regularly after the first course, I record a few memories of those days when we hoped for liberty for the nations of the world, but had no particular grounds to go on if we wanted to argue that it was likely. A sonnet I wrote called "The Old Bells" expressed what I felt about things then, and looking at it again today, I really think it expressed what a good many other people in England probably felt at the same time. In that belief I reproduce it here.

THE OLD BELLS

I cannot see the end; I cannot see
When we will win or how.
That being so Let us go on without attempt to know
In what month or what year that end will be.

It may be that by you, or even me,
The last shot will be fired before the glow
Of bonfires hailing Hitler's overthrow,
When our dumb bells ring out for victory.
Think of that day, when tyranny seems strong
And rations low and fortitude abating.
Think of that day for which our bells are waiting,
Which rang of old when the storm drave along
King Philip's ships, and chimed for Waterloo,
And rang out Hindenburg. Soon Hitler too.

One evening after dinner I saw a lovely sight in front of our house, and called to my wife to come out and look at it, a little golden sun setting over our woods. I didn't do that any more, for a bomb soon followed the flare; not very close, but near enough for us to smell it.

About that time I went up to London to read a tale at Broadcasting House after dinner, and saw some of my friends at lunch at the Beefsteak Club. The Germans had got to London that morning, but had not come very far in, and I saw nothing of them. Going back that night I remember there was a full moon, and I was struck by the contrast between the enormous peacefulness of the moonlight, lying like a blessing over the fields and houses, and the use to which the moon was at that time being put. But that particular night no bombers came.

I kept no diary of those strange days, and with the exception of two dates, August 15th and September 15th, I do not remember on what particular day anything happened. I think there was never a day except August 14th on which nothing did happen. I wrote to my friend Edgar McWilliam about this time, and I remember writing in that letter "Do you have many battles where you are? We do here." For I had not then quite got the idea that this was one battle, and one on which the fate of the world depended. The stimulus of it was good for my poetry and increased it and deepened it, until noisy nights began to tire me and during October I wrote little, nor much more till the end of that year. I mention this because, if anyone reads this book at all, it will only be on account of work that I have done, and therefore I speak of that work here more than of other things. I suppose that all dangerous stimulants have much the same effect, and that war increased my output for a while as laudanum increased Coleridge's, but

the after effects were not so beneficial to either of us. One day at the beginning of those times my telephone bell made itself heard above other noises, and I heard Colonel Hadow's voice, beginning with the words "There has been a certain amount of activity." The Americans are the principal masters of the humour of understatement, but others can do it too. Colonel Hadow went on to say that I might find something interesting if I took a look round the hills and valleys beyond my woods. So I put on my uniform and took a rifle and went to look, but found nothing. But, though I had nothing to report, I was glad that the view was taken that we were not entirely outside this battle and might possibly be of some use. I used to go every day after that, as soon as the sirens sounded, up to the top of the hill that slopes from the front of my house; for I was no longer agile enough to hurry up hills, should anything occur at the top, whereas I might still hurry down them. So the obvious thing to do was to start at the top. I could not go up and down those hills all day, so I used to choose my battle, usually one between breakfast and lunch, and go up and watch it from the high ground, where the view was very good and where, as I have already said, I had always thought they might land, if they landed at all. One day, as I went up through our woods, I heard a longer stream of single machine-gun fire than I had ever heard in the air before. I could hardly believe at first that it came from an aeroplane and fancied it must have been from a machine-gun on the ground, because, if airmen fired like that, they would soon be without ammunition. But the airman had got on to a bomber, and was not going to let him go. I heard the bomber going down while I was in the wood; and, when I got to the open ground on the top, I met a farmer who had seen it dip under the trees, and blending the information of his eyes with that of my ears I was able to know exactly where the bomber must be, although the wood hid it from both of us. So I went into the farmhouse, which is on my property, and telephoned to Colonel Hadow, who told me to telephone to the platoon commander of the area in which the bomber had come down. But it so happened that he was out digging a trench at the time and the bomber had dropped in front of him, and he requested its four occupants to come with him, which they immediately did. Two of them needed an ambulance, and were lifted into it by Shoreham men with the utmost gentleness, until their exhortations to each other to be careful annoyed the doctor, who, remarking that they were not careful where they put down their bombs, told the Shoreham men to hurry up and put them in. Much

depends on the point of view, and that doctor had probably been working, and overworking, for long among shattered limbs.

A strange war. I took my wife and my cook to see that bomber, or rather our chauffeur drove us there, and we had only just started when we saw rooks soaring in spirals into the air and then saw air-raid wardens standing in the village in steel hats, which meant another battle had started. We went in the direction of Censorham, and its barrage was blazing. On our way back from the bomber we saw a home-guard with his rifle, sheltering under a railway-bridge with a girl. I wondered if they had chosen the best spot to shelter, for a railway-bridge is an objective, though it is a fine protection against splinters. He called out to me, "There are two parachutes there." It seemed too good to be true, and indeed turned out to be. But I stopped the car and got out and had a look, and there sure enough were two white objects in the sky, looking very like parachutes. So I got my revolver and joined the man under the bridge, feeling a bit of a poacher, because they were his parachutes. But I did worse than share his bird, for I noticed that our airmen were shooting at the parachutes, so I looked at them through my field-glasses and then had to tell him that they were only balloons that had been shot loose and which were drifting from London eastwards. It was a sad moment for both of us, just as we thought we might be going to do something useful.

I said that all the men in our platoon, that is to say in Sir Herbert Cohen's, might shoot rabbits in my woods for so long as the war lasted: that was my contribution to the strategy of this war. There were grander plans than that, as the world knows, but I thought no further than learning the way of the woods and contriving concealment in them and acquiring the art of outwitting a rabbit. It seemed to me that a good badge for the L.D.V. would have been a hand holding a dead rabbit by the hind legs, and the motto Invisus. For such manœuvres as that our uniform was extremely well chosen, and when we practised in woods in the evening under Sir Herbert Cohen I noticed that the men were almost invisible. I wore my old khaki myself, but the uniforms that were then being given out were better even than that. It seemed funny to be doing elementary recruits' drill while the guns were roaring; rather as though we were learning to ride a pony and were booked to ride a horse in the Derby on the same day. Again Hitler repeated to the world his promise that he was coming soon.

Though Milton, describing a rather similar battle, said "Confounded Chaos roared," when the presumptuous fighters were shot down by a flying fortress, I have read nothing to show that he knew the sound that Lucifer's wings would have made as he fell from that height. The height he conveys very clearly, and much else, but not the sound of the fall. So I wrote the following lines that August, and they were printed, as were many other of the poems I wrote at that time, in the *Daily Sketch.* This was the poem.

FAUNA OF KENT

One thing I know which Milton never knew:
When Satan fell, hurled headlong to the shade
Of Hell eternal out of Heaven's blue,
I know the screaming wail his pinions made.

CHAPTER XV

STRIKING AT THE FOOD SUPPLY

So numberless were those bad angels seen.

Paradise Lost.

WHAT else do I remember from those days of the wakeful sirens? They usually woke a little after we did, and again in the afternoon, and nearly always they sang just after all the birds had gone to sleep. Then the searchlights beyond the two sides of our valley went roaming about the sky, and sometimes one of them would flash its beam from left to right, from horizon to horizon, and then remain pointing at something that it had found. Others would come up then, peering through the dark, and join it, forming a great silver pyramid. I very soon found that the bomber that one could hear exactly above one's house could not be above it really, for the simple reason that it stayed there for a minute or two, and no plane takes that time to pass over the roof of a small house. Yet it did sound exactly above, and this I soon perceived was because the noise comes down the chimney, and so any noise that there is in the sky comes to one from straight overhead. Sometimes air-marshals wrote to the papers to say that one could not distinguish the sound of a German bomber from the sound of one of our own; but we, the toads under the harrow, knew, and I don't think we ever mistook them, except once when I mistook the purring of our kitten for that of a four-engined bomber. One day our vicar called and asked if I would not write to the War Office about the very unpleasant habit of a man who, as soon as it got dark, used to sail his bomber round and round our valley for something like two hours. I said that, though I had no authority to write to the War Office, I thought that he as vicar of the parish had every right to ask for protection. If he did, the answer was excessively prompt, for a great number of guns came down only the next day, and the following night their barrage was roaring from about two miles away. The noise of it heartened everyone, but it frightened the Germans rather more than we wanted, so that some of them timidly dropped their bombs on our farms, sooner than go on through the barrage to London, not that they were not much better there

than they would have been a little further north-west. Our housemaid at Dunstall made rather a personal matter of it between her and Hitler, and sometimes Goering made her very angry. She used in the mornings sometimes to ask a question which sounded to me rather unnecessary: "Did you feel the house shake last night?" Those bombs may have been small compared to what man may yet do, but compared to anything known in any other war they seemed to me to be enormous: the last two wars seemed to me to be like machines fighting against men, but the missiles of this war felt more like an attack from some other planet, and the world herself seemed wounded. Nothing that I have to say of these times could have been told to anyone in England as an adventure: whatever these events may appear to the reader of some stray copy of this book wandering into another decade, all these things were commonplace to those of our generation: I remember a van from London coming down to our back door, and going to ask the driver about something that he had brought, and being told by him, and he said nothing more; and then I said, "Had you much difficulty getting here?" For the bombers were over our valley.

And he said, "In Brixton the dead were laid out in the streets."

Sometimes neighbours came to see us, usually bringing steel hats and revolvers, for England was no safer now than the countries that one used to call savage, where white hunters say to you, "Never be without your rifle." And we used sometimes to go to Highfield, where Sir Herbert and Lady Cohen lived a little more than a mile away. Lady Cohen always showed a keen curiosity about battles, whether they were being fought above her house or ours; and I remember one occasion when they were straight over us at tea-time, and she and Sir Herbert had come, bringing Sir Leonard and Lady Wooley, and she was watching the fighting and the Censorham barrage from under a lace parasol, which she suddenly lowered in order to explain to us that she was not using it as a protection. The contrast between the quiet I had known so long, of the room in which we were, and the cannon-fire over the lawn, was the material from which I later wrote this sonnet, called "To A House in Kent."

Old quiet rooms where I remember Spring
With bowls of primroses, then summer coming
And a bee roaming round the walls and humming

While just outside were all the birds that sing
In the low glow and hush of evening;
Now when the days are loud with sudden drumming
Of guns in air and the machine-gun's strumming
You scarce seem made to hold their echoing.
But, quiet rooms, that were so fit for peace,
All lovely influences you have known
Are with you still and will not ever cease
To bless your bricks and fortify your stone,
While every ghost from generations past
That haunts your walls says Hold out to the last.

When invasion no longer seemed to be coming that week, and no longer seemed to be certain to come at all, Colonel Hadow got me a few cartridges for my revolver, which were very hard to obtain, and I gave up carrying a rifle and took the revolver instead, which on our steep hills made my work much lighter. I did not regard a revolver as much of a weapon for fighting with, but when our work seemed to be more likely to be that of a keeper's dog going round after a big shoot than that of a soldier, the revolver would have done well enough if I had met anyone baling out from a crippled bomber. In fact the policeman of our village, Sergeant Mannering, collected one of these men, with no more argument to show than a knife. I do not mean that one would ever have thought of shooting this kind of sitting game, if game be not too good a word for them; but one could not easily have given orders to an armed man without being armed oneself.

One night after we had gone to bed we heard a scream, growing louder and louder, as a packet of bombs came down. There was no doubt about the direction of the explosion, and we were equally sure of the distance, which we placed as being about eighty yards, but it was well over a thousand. After that we took to sleeping in the cellar, where the concussions were felt much less, and sleep was easier. And the gardener's family found room to sleep there too, and a toad that had been there for years continued his residence.

I think our dog Tyke knew as much about the raids as we did, which wasn't much, for it was only by reading a pamphlet called "The Battle of Britain" long afterwards that I got to know anything much about what was happening. We used at first to close the shutters when the sirens went, as a

protection from the glass, and that entailed lighting candles, so that our little dog soon learned to distinguish between the warning and the All Clear. Later we gave up doing this, as bombs were rare by daylight. The shells of our batteries were excellent and we never had a dud in our garden. Naturally a nose-cap came down now and then and of course a few bullets, but never a shell: they all burst where they should, like a great hand rapping at the floor of a wooden heaven. Stories of knights and dragons have charmed the infancy of the world, and children and grown men have looked over their shoulders to find romance in past ages, but here were adventurous men riding home every evening into eldorados of sunset from their work of saving the world from the fate of Poland, from government of the people, by Germans, for Hitler, from one vast concentration camp. And the dream of all the ages, that men could fly, had come true, to give splendour to their adventure. Over the hills to the left of the sunset lay Croydon, and thither we used to see survivors from the day's fights going home in the gloaming, like knights riding back to Camelot with dragons' heads at their saddlebows. I suppose that stories of dragons came from the world's need for romance. Now we have Goering and his bombers; and the fights of our airmen with them, one against ten, should provide the world with all the material it needs for romantic tales for some time to come.

One night a bomb-stick came down in our chicken-run; not the bombs, but the aluminium stick around which they had been, with a kind of plate at one end on which they rested, rather like an umbrella-stand. We heard it sighing over the house and went to look for it next day: the bombs being heavier had travelled much further. One night, but that was before we got to know the toad, we heard what sounded like frantic blows being delivered at the village of Shoreham, but it was only somebody going home from London and dropping nine bombs as he went. Of course they were not very big, as, he carried nine of them; probably only a few hundredweight each. Luckily he just missed the village, coming right across the valley from west to east, over open farmland up to my cowman's cottage and stopping short of it. One fine shot he made, hitting our railway embankment, which a gang of men put right next day. Did he know a military objective when he saw it? Or had one of our fighters frightened him? Perhaps the one whose bomb-stick fell in our chicken-run was striking at the food-supply of the fortress of London. The chicken-run happened to be empty, but it would do well enough for German propaganda, so well that I should not let them have this

bit of information unless I thought that Radio Bremen would be warbling a very different song by the time this book is published.

One evening when we were out manoeuvring in woods with Sir Herbert Cohen I jotted down a poem, the lines of which sketch that time and that countryside as well as I can do it. I called it "Starlight in Kent."

A clear September night,
Pigs under oak-trees rooting,
Flocks bleating out of sight,
Owl after owl hooting,
Searchlights to left and right,
Bombs falling and guns shooting.

I don't know anyone who liked those bombs, or anybody who would have missed that experience: that I looked rather longingly to a time when there would be quiet nights again is suggested by the next poem, that I called "While Goering Rages."

All the old things remain,
Wind in the wood brawling,
Glitter of Charles's Wain,
Foxes to vixens calling.
There shall be nights again
With not a bomb falling.

CHAPTER XVI

GOERING AND I

ONE day in September Sir John Chancellor rang up from the offices of the British Council to ask me if I would go to Athens to take the Byron Chair of English Literature. Their audacity in sending anyone about the world as though there were no war of any importance amused me, and after I had accepted I could not resist saying, "How on earth will you get me there?" I told Sir John that I was in the Home Guard, but he did not seem to attach to that the importance that I did; or he pointed out that my work in Greece would be more important. And so it was decided that I should go, via Lisbon and Lake Chad, though as often happens with plans made in times of war, another was substituted. My wife, not at all deterred by the foam of perilous seas, suggested that she should come too; and later, when Lord Lloyd told me that I should have a few other things to do besides lecturing, I said that my wife would be a great help, and he agreed. And so she was. A day or two later I went to see Lord Lloyd, then head of the British Council, at the Colonial Office, and I have had better journeys in the wildest parts of Africa. My chauffeur and I started off in the morning, and Goering had had the fancy to go to London at the same time, and by the same route. We met him at Green Street Green, and at Farnborough he put down a bomb not very far from us; its grey smoke wreathed a house as we went by. Travelling a few hundred miles an hour faster than we did he was soon on ahead of us, but he made such a mess of the road by which we were going that in Lower Sydenham and Camberwell and the West End we were continually being diverted by the police, and did not easily find London. We had the roads almost to ourselves for the first half of the journey, but our circumambulations during the second part of it took up so much time that I was late for lunch at the Savage Club, where Professor Routh had invited me. However, he gave me a very good lunch, but for the noise, when I did arrive; and I saw there a very charming and delightful friend, Colonel Eaton, and saw him for the last time, for he died about a year later. Professor Routh had asked me to lunch with him in order to give me a lot of information about Athens, for he was one of the two professors who had held that chair in the University of Athens before me, the other one having

been Laurence Binyon. This was only the third day I had spent in London during the war, and the local table-manners were still a little strange to me; for there are local table-manners as well as universal ones: for instance in tropical Africa one does not remark, "There is a beetle on the table," or squash it on the table-cloth, and in the same way in London one did not point out that bombs were falling. I said to my host at one moment, "That one sounded rather close," and I realized this attitude towards beetles and other vermin when he said to me, "Well, one doesn't notice that kind of thing very much here."

From this delightful club, where I had sometimes been entertained before, when its name stood out in the midst of a once civilized world, I went to see Sir John Chancellor, and afterwards Lord Lloyd. They were both very kind in giving me all the information I needed, though Lake Chad proved but a mirage in the fierce glare of history, for many hopeful things that Lord Lloyd told me about the French parts of Africa were dispelled like dreams a few days later by some battleships that escaped from the waters of Vichy. And I was told the date of our departure, according to the higher mathematics of war-time, that is to say some time between the first Monday of last week and next Michaelmas. But there is one difference between higher mathematics and the dates of the sailing of ships whose course is zigzag, and that is that in higher mathematics, if the answer can be found, it is right, whereas in the other case it is not. In the end I told my friends that I was going to Lake Chad, which at that time was true, and yet seemed sufficiently misleading to meet all requirements of war-time. My wife was made my secretary and was sent with me by the British Council; nor was that any mere pretence, for she worked her passage. I had not seen Lord Lloyd before, and never saw him again, but his was one of those personalities that hold firm places in memory, though only known for an hour.

There had been a bit of an All Clear during the afternoon, but the sirens woke again on our way back, and in Sydenham they were putting up the shutters on the shop windows. As we went through Bromley its siren announced that that raid was over. The Germans returned about nightfall, as they always did.

One day a thing occurred which I have never ceased to regret: our dog started barking, and we found a carrier pigeon exhausted on our verandah just out of reach: so exhausted it appeared that I wasted time planning how

to catch it. As the Germans were over at the time, it seems likely that they had dropped it to save it some hundreds of miles of flying, and its exhaustion may have been due to the long descent. It flew away before it could be caught, and I ought to have shot it. I wonder where the spy lived. Not far away, if the Germans did drop him over our valley, though it may have been one of ours after all, frightened by the raid until it became exhausted. We did not go out to tea very much, for petrol was scarcer than shrapnel; besides Highfield we went to see Colonel and Mrs. Hadow, where they lived near the Pilgrims' Way with a nice collection of rifles. Different houses have different kinds of views, Everlands for instance, where we used sometimes to go in times of peace to Lady Angela Campbell's tennis parties, had such a view rolling far into Sussex as the name suggests, but Colonel Hadow had more sky in front of his house than I can remember in any other view from a drawing-room window, for the land sloped away to the south from the downs to the weald. One day an order came to the air-raid wardens telling them to stay in their houses and keep their ears and eyes open. Was Hitler coming for his coronation? But nothing happened. And gradually the beech-woods turned scarlet and golden, and sunny days and furious nights passed by, and we set out on our journey, deciding to start at the first All Clear after lunch. And the All Clear duly came and our car started. I should mention a curious thing for such as it may interest, which is that a stray dog with a starved appearance had timidly approached our backdoor about a fortnight earlier, presumably a refugee from some bombed house in the neighbourhood, and had gradually settled down with us, and even seemed to accept the name of Blitz which I gave him; yet the night before we left he disappeared. Since then I have read of a stray dog that became great friends with a man, but deserted him the day before he was to have been deserted by his new master. Dogs never fail to know when one is about to leave a house, or to be deeply depressed by it; perhaps a dog that has strayed once sees in an approaching journey of his new owner another disaster for him and knows that it is time for his own travels again. He never came back to the house. Soon after we started another raid began and, as we had plenty of time, we sheltered for a while in the Chislehurst caves, strange places with a long history, which are well worth seeing in peace or war: they go from barbarous times when flints were chipped for weapons, and men and women sheltered underground, to barbarous times when they shelter there again. Meanwhile Goering got ahead of us and,

about where we entered Chelsea, or tried to, we came on a ghastly black pit that went entirely across a wide road. We tried another road, but were soon diverted again, by hose-pipes of the Fire Brigade lying across it. Once more it seemed difficult to get into London. When we got there we sent the car back, so that our chauffeur should get home before the night raid, which we afterwards heard he just did. Our train was to go at 6.30 p m., and as we arrived at Euston station by taxi, at ten to six, the warning went. For a while we waited in the tube, where several hundred people were patiently preparing to spend the rest of the night. But after a while we went to the platform to wait for our train, of which the only certain news we had was that it would be late. We were also told that it would not run at all, which worried me rather at first, for I had forgotten that that is the kind of information you get if you ask about trains in war; it is a tactless question to ask, and if they connect with the sailing of ships it is positively rude. I need not have worried, for, if the train was a few hours late, the ship was a day or two late. The platform lay in pitch darkness, crowded with tolerant people who forgave being bumped into as readily as though the angel of peace were over them, a curious effect for Goering to reflect on in Hell. Shining through the glass roof we saw the occasional red flash of our shells: there was no other light. At ten o'clock the six-thirty drew in, and we all got in and sat down. We did not know where we were going, and were told either Liverpool or Glasgow. But we did not go anywhere for another half-hour and then we went about ten yards, and somebody shouted, and we stopped at once and moved no more for an hour. Things got still more noisy after that, and the engines sounded loud overhead. Some while earlier they had got a small hotel beside the station. The irony of just missing our journey to Athens appeared as a possibility. Some time about twenty minutes before midnight at last we started, going about as fast as a man running, and sometimes dropping into a walk or sitting down to rest. There were no signals shining, and I noticed an ingenious substitute which I will not talk about here. Our batteries roared off as we passed them, so that our journey had all the embellishments of beginning with the salute of a hundred guns. We crawled past guns for an hour, and all of a sudden the train gave itself a little shake, like a dog going out for a walk, and raced away at its natural speed; and my wife's thoughts and mine turned then to a basket in which there was a cold partridge that I had shot in Kent, and we ate it in perfect quiet but for the sound of the train. There remained nothing more to

consider but how to make ourselves comfortable for the night. There are some who think that you cannot be comfortable in war, or should not expect to be, but it is wonderful how much comfort can be obtained by giving a little thought to it, under almost any circumstances. We were in one of those carriages that only hold three, with a bare wall in front of us; I sat in the middle and an unknown lady sat in the dark on my left. I put the cushion from my seat on to the floor and lay on it and used my coat as a pillow, while my legs straddled over the rest of the breadth of the carriage, and there at full length I slept very well. My wife then had my seat as well as her own, though I am afraid it made a very short bed, and I am afraid that the other lady sat up all night; but you cannot offer a lady the floor, not as a bed. We reached Glasgow about midday, where the *Arundel Castle* provided us with coffee and sandwiches, which assumed the importance that does attach to such things in time of war. A sparrow noticed the crumbs and dived down for them, and the thought came to me like something bright and new that there were still things flying in air which threatened us with no harm. The *Arundel Castle* seemed very reluctant to start, and hung about in the Clyde for two or three days. When we did start, all the workers along the Clyde waved to us as we passed them, a very kind farewell, but a little ominous.

CHAPTER XVII

DOTS ON THE CHART

But the master was careless enough to miss his course, and the ship went astray with us and entered a sea other than the sea we sought.

The Arabian Nights. The Seventeenth Night.

FOR two days we and others were guarded by a cruiser and four destroyers. Then we left the convoy, but soon ran back to it, and then slipped away again and went off alone, trusting to our speed. It looked as if the captain wanted to go to New York, but, thinking better of it, preferred Brazil, and again changing his mind, fetched up at Sierra Leone. These are no confidences, for we were not in the confidence of the ship's officers: we got our longitude from the clock and our latitude from the flying fishes, and that was all the information we were allowed to have, until we saw the hills of Sierra Leone. In one of the ships in which we sailed on this journey a ship's officer told me that land was five miles away, but this is so old a wheeze that I was able to tell him that I knew where that was. About once a week we saw smoke on the horizon, from which we always fled, and it from us. Just as chess can be a change, and even a rest, from other hard work, so a change of danger can be exhilarating, and we were cheered by the lovely sea, and by the welcome of the sun as we went towards it. But first of all we slept off the Battle of Britain; and our quest of New York, if it was really what we were looking for, enabled us to have about twelve hours in bed for the first few days, while the clocks were being put back. We met two friends on board, and made a great many more; and, looking back on it, the contrast between our care-free merry days, and the awful responsibilities of the captain and his officers, appears very vividly. I should like to know where we went and what we were doing, but the flying fishes never told us that, and the ship's officers would not say, for fear that we should tell it to the flying fishes. I think our situation was like that of a ship in a story which I once read in a comic paper: an old lady went up to the captain's chart-room to ask him if they were safe, and the captain, showing his chart, said, "If all those dots are fly-droppings, we are all right. But if they are rocks...!" I imagine that our captain's chart was covered with dots like that, and that

they were not fly-droppings. The U-boats sank 198,000 tons of our shipping in that first week, which I think at the time was regarded as a record. I imagine our course was decided a good deal by what news of them was received by the wireless officer. I do not suppose that during that first week the captain thought we were so safe that prayers were unnecessary; but, whatever the reason, we had no service on that first Sunday. Anyhow, we got to Sierra Leone.

There was once a time when fortune-tellers used to begin their prophecies by saying, "You will soon take a journey. Probably across water." But all such statements are illegal nowadays. There was a lady on board our ship in the M.T.C., whose husband was at Takoradi, our next stop. But she had never been allowed to tell him that she was going there, nor was she allowed to wire now. When we got to Ashanti, and anchored in the port of Takoradi, Mrs. Newall, who commanded our M.T.C., was able by a great display of energy, resolution and other qualities, to get a note to this lady's husband, who got to the ship before we left and came on it to our next port, which was Lagos in Nigeria. Some boxes had been put aboard in Glasgow labelled for St. Helena, and, when I saw that things were as secret as all this, it seemed to me that all I could tell my friends in letters was that I was going to St. Helena to get it ready for Hitler. Of course we never touched at St. Helena, nor for that matter can Hitler now have any hope of being given as good treatment as what we gave to Napoleon. I am not at all presuming to criticize this secrecy, for two men who were at the top of the business of secrecy during the last war made at different times a perfectly harmless remark to me, but the two harmless remarks so perfectly fitted together that I easily guessed from them a piece of very secret information, which I have never divulged. They have both since died, but for which I would not say even this much, innocent though each of their remarks was. After leaving Lagos we saw no more land for some weeks, though we often passed all night by the illuminations of thunderstorms that were raging on our port side over Africa. On moonless nights the decks were so dark that one could not easily distinguish between other passengers and the rest of the night. Stars began to appear again that I had not seen for many years.

We had on board some British and Free French troops going to Takoradi, and a unit of the M.T.C. that got off at Capetown. I soon realized in that ship, what I realize again as I write this book, that there was no one to whom I could tell any stories of the Battle of Britain: they had all of them

seen it. A lady in the next cabin to us used to leave her light on all night, and it shone through cracks into our cabin. It seemed to me to be a mistake, because, if we were hit, all lights would probably go out, and she would have been worse off than any of us, who were more accustomed to the dark; but logic does not decide everything, and the Battle of Britain had evidently left her with a preference for light at night. Several had been bombed out of their houses, but mostly seemed to accept it as the way of the world. We did not have the games that passengers know in big ships in times of peace, but we were not without amusements, and some of us played chess, which is probably played in all ships both in peace and war, and I played simultaneous chess against some of the M.T.C. And there was an exhibition by Capitaine des F., — a French officer, who could paint fishes as skilfully as our enemies the Japanese. He kindly gave me a portrait that he did of myself, which makes the frontispiece of this book. We regretfully parted from him and all the French soldiers on board when we got to Takoradi. I should have mentioned earlier, for I think we heard it earlier, that Italy and Greece went to war while we were on that journey; but we were coming from war, and the long battle was troubling the Atlantic, and war seemed to be the state of most of the world, so that war at our destination did not seem to be anything so unusual as it would have appeared in other times. The British Council sent me no instructions to the contrary, so we continued our journey towards Greece. I sometimes thought, turning back to the days of peace, that if I had gone to a doctor and said, “I don’t sleep very well. My house shakes sometimes at night and I hear noises,” he would have said, “Don’t pay any attention to things like that, but take a long sea-voyage.” And that was just the thing that the British Council were giving me.

A long journey by sea would, to begin with, make a whole book; and that is leaving out the thousand or so that could be written if by observation, imagination and sympathy one could get at something of the life of each passenger and of each of the crew. But to write the first of these books one would have to overcome the apparent monotony of the weeks in which no land was seen and no other ship, when the only visible life beyond our rails was that of the flying fishes and sometimes a porpoise, or a bird that would stimulate our guesses about the distance from land, too inaccurate to be called auguries. But this monotony is only apparent to the unseeing eye; for to look at the sea wherever it is not hidden by the glare of the sun is to observe that every wave is different from the next and that they are all like

liquid jewels, changing not only as jewels change in every light, but passing from shape to shape with a beauty full of more variety than I can remember and which I am quite unable to describe now, for I never thought of making any notes of it while it was all around me; nor indeed have I ever taken notes of anything, letting the hours slide by me like living butterflies rather than those in the collections of entomologists. Nor were the nights monotonous, as the stars that were new to some of us rose higher in their places, but the absolute darkness of the decks discouraged us from going out on them much after nightfall.

And then there were the other passengers, but I will leave them to tell their own stories, and there are plenty of stories to be told, for some had been with the M.T.C. in France and had escaped after being captured; and there were the French troops too, none of whom could have got where they now were without some adventure that would make a thrilling story, and most of the rest had seen the Battle of Britain, which was to the New Order what the Battle of Gettysburg was to a milder form of slavery. And one day about the middle of November land appeared, and there was Table Mountain and its white cloth of cloud with which the wind so tidily drapes it; and that night we saw a sight at which we must all have wondered, for the world we knew had grown too grim for it, a city with all its streets alight, Capetown under its mountain sitting as though crowned with jewels, and with heaps of jewels in her lap.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE KRAALS OF THE ZULUS

Before him like a blood-red flag,
The bright flamingoes flew;
From morn till night he followed their flight,
O'er plains where the tamarind grew,
Till he saw the roofs of the Kaffir huts,
And the ocean rose to view.

LONGFELLOW.

NEXT morning we saw the captain at his own table. We sat at his table, but had not seen him at it for a month, since we had left the Clyde. At Capetown we said farewell to another force, a unit of the M.T.C. Their commander had asked me one day when we were further North if I would write a rhyme for them; so I did so, basing it on the very handsome badge that they wore. I dated it S.S. *Anonymous Castle,* October 25th, 1940, for ships in time of war are secretive things; and it went like this:

Springbok dancing in the stars,
The five that make the Southern Cross,
May your wearers drive their cars
Far afield and without loss,
To gather tales that men shall hear
With wonder in some peaceful year.

We went ashore at Capetown and walked to an hotel to have lunch, and a hard walk it was. A wind was raging down the streets from the mountain, and we and other people used to shelter behind street-corners, and then go on a bit further and shelter again, for one could not easily stand against the big gusts, or walk without difficulty at any time. When we got nearer the mountain we were under the swoop of the wind, or else it dropped a little, and we were able to walk more easily. I remember the beautiful fresh oranges, and then on the way back we walked through the public gardens,

places of rare beauty. For two days that wind shut us into the harbour, and then we went on to Port Elizabeth, which we reached in a few days. Hostile though cities must always be to the countryside, which they conquer and lay waste before they build their streets and which they hold down with their pavement, yet they sometimes relent, and Port Elizabeth, like other African cities, preserves a little piece of unspoiled wild Africa, a small valley full of forest. It evidently was quite a wild forest still, what was left of it, for a lean brown young cat that we had never seen before, came up to us as we approached it and came with us and wanted to hunt in it. But not only were there things in that forest that cats could hunt, at any rate in the opinion of that cat, who after all should have known, but there was evidently something there that was too big for cats, for it continually ran back to us and seemed to attach some value to the protection of its two new acquaintances. More of the town than this, its old enemy that it had spared, we did not see. Then we went on for Durban. And there we arrived a day or two later, late in the evening. We expected to go on the next morning, for we had been given what is called priority, but nobody came on board till midnight and we were assured that nothing would be done that night, so we went to bed. In the early hours someone did come on board from the Imperial Airways, to tell us that we could start at dawn; but, however quickly we dressed and packed, there would not have been time for all the ceremonial connected with passports and other papers; so we had three days to wait in Durban before the next flying boat started. There we ate pawpaws flavoured with lemon-juice, and fresh oranges and many other beautiful kinds of fruit. And one day we drove twenty or thirty miles to see the Valley of a Thousand Hills, a place where many mountains sat as though gazing far away through the ages to see things strange and new, or only waiting for the coming home of the things they had known of old. We looked long at their grave blue heads, and then were taken by a rough road to see on a nearer slope some kraals of the Zulus, for this part of the country had been given back to them, and there they still live in their old way in their round wattled huts. Old races and old ways must go down before efficiency: Darwin taught that, and Hitler too, and the thing is too trite to mourn about. But how shall we fare with our own efficiency? Will it always be our weapon? Or will it ever become a sword of Damocles in our house? It is certainly thinning out the Zulus. I am not referring now to our efficiency in battle, for it is not the machine-gun that is thinning them now, and that did not kill so

many; I am thinking of the efficiency of a system too elaborate to go into here, but whose effect is tuberculosis. The Zulus cannot live healthily in our cities, or on the food with which those cities now supply them. Shall we be able to? That is the question that concerns us. We are a tougher race than the Zulus; but how long shall we be able to hold out against what is beating them? Our commercial system is a mighty force; but are we as tough as it? Nobody but some miserable food-faddist, as he is always called, would ever dare to suggest that health is more important to us all, shopkeeper and customer, than Commerce and all its breakfast-foods. Nobody is going to help us in our struggle against the efficiency of our own system. The men who live by these things are too busy living by them to realize that they die by them with the rest of us; not all at once, but a few years sooner than they would have died if they had eaten wholesome food. The Zulus throve on the corn that they ground in querns: they are helpless against the pale adulterated flour: it is sold to them and they eat it. So do we.

If you read a man's story you must sometimes come upon his reflections, for if he keep them all to himself he is too miserly a companion for a few of your hours of leisure. If you find the reflection tedious, my reader, it is not for long that I have wearied you with it, and I turn again to the tale of my own doings; yet what trivial matters they are compared with the welfare of the race! But if my reflection has by chance made you angry, as it was not intended to do, then surely you have some share, however indirect, in the system that sells that food and so abundantly offers cures for indigestion. Is it too late to abandon it?

In the early morning of November 16th we continued our journey, going out of the door of our hotel in the dark, when wakefulness seems so strange among the few who are awake, and while the camp-fire of Dick King still burned, for among wild rocks and cactus there is hidden an electric light which glows red by the statue of the man who saved Natal, riding his bronze horse on and on through the centuries. Crickets were still calling, when our day began. We were weighed, with all our luggage. It was difficult to imagine in the Natalian summer, with the equator before us, the need for a fur coat; and, thinking I should not be able to bear to look at it on the journey, I left it behind, and longed for it later on. We went on board the Caledonia, a Sunderland, and the water raged past the windows, and the sun rose and turned it gold. Earth and its streams slanted, and righted themselves, and soon we were on the other side of the clouds. I had never

flown before, never seen till now the fulfilment of a dream of childhood, and of the whole race of man for as long as any record of his dreams has been kept. And it was to a new land that we came, for the clouds were a new land to me seen from that side. I may have seen clouds below me more than once before then, but the only time I can remember having seen them like that was one day stalking at Conaglen, when I came over the heathery edge of a valley and suddenly saw two clouds below me floating above a lake. But now we were flying over a whole world of clouds, and through gaps in them glimpses of earth rarely intruded. In those glimpses we saw hills looking like banks on ornamental lawns, and then a forest, strange as a picture by Sime; and sometimes in a clearing a Zulu kraal, eight or ten round huts round a cattle-pen. A few white clouds swept past us like lost angels and then we came to a flat cloudland stretching as far as we could see, with a few white gleaming cloud-kopjes rising up from it, and not another glimpse of earth at all. It was a brighter world than the one we knew, except for the brightest days that shine when our world is snow-clad. A mountain came floating by us, faintly touched with gold. I thought that the moon might be no stranger than this.

All across this white world our shadow ran, with a rainbow round it. We saw a crevice winding among the clouds like a river, and through it got a glimpse of the earth and a real river running. Still the forest lay below us, whenever we saw earth, and the Zulu kraals in the clearings. When our shadow ran on the earth it was small and had no rainbow; but now it grew from the size of a moth to that of an eagle, and larger still, and we began to rock and the heat rushed in on us, and the sea appeared, with what looked like scrub beside it, but which really was forest, and a blush rose from the shore and went out to sea, a flock of flamingoes. Houses and trees grew larger, and the air seemed solider and more bumpy, and the earth tilted, and we came down into Lorenzo Marques. There we refuelled and went on, heading for Beira four hundred miles to the north, and the forest was below us all the way. We flew at nine thousand feet, and our moth-like shadow was almost exactly under us, showing that the sun must be nearly vertical. Clouds like great icebergs in an invisible sea passed us, and trailed their shadows over the forest. Beira was brilliant with flamboyant trees, and trees with great bean-like pods such as might have grown on a beanstalk of fairyland. From Beira to Mozambique was five hundred miles, and there we stopped for the night, twelve hundred miles on our way. We were rowed out

to a house-boat on a lake, and the sun set behind palms, and then the moon came up through a wood, all red like a camp-fire.

At four in the morning, when an electric light was about equal to the strength of the twilight, we went on board the Sunderland. Houses in front of us seemed, as they often did, like something we could barely clear, and a very few seconds later they were below us, looking like doll's houses. As we rose we met the sun, and saw some small pink clouds coming in from sea. Something by the shore that looked like a dog turned out to be a sailing-boat; trees looked like scrub, and palm-trees like coarse grass; a small fire at the edge of the forest sent its gauzy cloud of smoke far through the misty air, as though Mother Earth threw off a wrap that she had worn in the night. And still the forest was with us, with a few clouds hanging over it. We were only flying now at a thousand feet, and could see the foot-tracks in the forest, and a few square huts, larger than those of the Zulus. After three hundred and fifty miles we came down at Lindi on to a lake with blue water-lilies, and refuelled and flew on. And the blue sea appeared with lines of purple seaweed that seemed to be lying in the beds of ocean-currents. And in two hundred and twenty miles more we came to Dar-es-Salaam. There we bought pine-apples for three or four pence apiece, and flew on over Zanzibar and passed the island of Pemba, and at the end of a hundred and ninety miles we came to a town I knew. This was Mombasa. And now we had left the forest behind us and flew over a green plain patched with purple, the purple being the shadows of the clouds, which we saw raging past us, though their shadows were incredibly calm and still. Though we had left the forest we had not left Africa's red earth, which here and there flashed through the green. Far off the green turned to blue, like the blue of the sea. At seven thousand feet we drew level with the clouds and at ten thousand feet were above them. Far off we saw the black head of Kilimanjaro streaked with grey; and so I described him in a story that I wrote a few months later, but I was asked if I would mind that paragraph being left out when the tale was printed in the *Strand.* I consented, perhaps rather grudgingly, but the editor was perfectly right, for I might have known that the head of that mountain must be white, even though I had seen it black, for I knew Kenya Mountain well, which is nearer the equator and nine hundred feet lower, and its head and shoulders are always covered with snow. But I did not realize till later that, hidden by mist or the glare of the sky, there must have been a peak of snow, rising above the black rock that I

saw, streaked with glaciers. Still, I attach a certain value to anything seen and reported on: a man may say that he saw the moon looking like the horns of a cow, and a more scientific person will know in what latitude he must have been, and at what time, and all the while the moon is perfectly round. Then we went up to fifteen thousand feet, to avoid bumping too violently into the air that over mountains seems to take their shape and to build invisible peaks in the path of an aeroplane. But it was very bumpy even there, and also very thin, and some of the flying officers came now and then into the passengers' room and picked up books and began to read them, and looked over the tops of the pages to see if any of us were turning blue. One passenger was sick, and I think the rest of us thought miserably about a cup of meat extract that we had drunk earlier, though whether we were suffering from air-sickness, mountain-sickness or indigestion I never knew. We came down on the Great Lake beside Kisumu, having done twelve hundred miles that day. We went to a comfortable hotel, and I heard Swahili being spoken again. A bird called all night long, and all the crickets chirruped.

CHAPTER XIX

LOST MOUNTAINS

Boundless and bare
The lone and level sands stretched far away.

SHELLEY.

NEXT morning we went down to the shore of the lake before Kisumu woke, and poultry were still roosting in the frangipani trees. Before us lay a range of towering clouds. How often has one gazed at clouds and thought they were like mountains. Like Longfellow's dreaming slave "we saw the roofs of the kaffir huts": clusters of them like clusters of mushrooms lay with their bomas round them to keep off lions, and the cattle inside the bomas looked as though someone had emptied a child's Noah's ark. The red and green plain again, and patches of forest. Then we passed a little lake, and one of the flying officers told us we had entered the Northern hemisphere. Again we passed over part of Lake Victoria, and came down from six thousand feet to Port Bell among dark-blue and purple water-lilies. We were in Uganda now, close to the source of the Nile. In a couple of hundred miles we came to the Murchison Falls, and swooped to see them and swerved round them. So much we swerved that I did not at first quite see which way they were falling, up or down. This is the Nile's first cataract. It was a holiday among the hippos, and they were all bathing, and rows of crocodiles watched them from the banks. Again I saw the water-buck and the impala, buffaloes, rhinos and warthogs, and nearly all the African game that I knew. Great elephants appeared, and we came down low to look at them; the younger ones sprang away from us and bolted into the high grass like rabbits, but the big bulls stood their ground with their long tusks flashing, and lifted their huge black ears. With another stop at Rejaf we came, about eight hundred miles from Kisumu, to Malakal on the White Nile. And here I saw again those sere and shining grasses that are the very smile of Africa. Fifteen years earlier I had passed Malakal on the journey southward, and here it was again with its wild grass shining, and I was not yet confined entirely to the paved ways of orderly lands, not that there were many orderly lands now left in the world. Had these remained

orderly, I suppose I should have continued to enjoy their advantages, such as they are, and should have no more seen except in memory the enchantment that rises up from the uncertainties and discomforts of the lands that no one has tamed. It is curious that the wild look of the grasses going right from the edge of the garden beside the rest-house should have attracted me more than two momentous things, one of them an aerodrome only a hundred and fifty yards away, with a few small craters round it, under a red moon, an objective for the Italians across the Abyssinian border, and the other ten times deadlier, the hum all round us of the mosquito that carries yellow fever, for he had got into Malakal. Double doors of very fine wire protected the rest-house, and mosquito-curtains protected the beds; but the deadliest of the mosquitoes is smaller than all the rest, and he got through the meshes without difficulty and trumpeted all night. A doctor called in the evening and signed some sort of charm that enabled us to proceed next day, for the world beyond was afraid of Malakal. In the morning we went on, and Africa dried as we went. Sparse scrub and sand appeared, then less scrub, then desert where scrub was rare, just north of Kosti; and, after Merowe, sheer savage yellow desert. We came on mountain ranges lost in the desert, with rivers in all their valleys, and tributaries running down to them, and streams winding into the tributaries; and rivers and tributaries and streams were all dry golden sand. Over those streams and down the mountains and on through the desert our moth-like shadow ran, and we came to Wadi Haifa. We did not do this in one flight, but stopped a few minutes at Khartoum on the way. And there a fancy had come to me, remembering that Sir John Maffey had governed the Sudan from Khartoum, and remembering how he had kindly helped me with permits to get over to Kent, but for which I should have been late for the Blitz, an experience I never pretended to enjoy, but which I would not have missed for anything; remembering these things, it occurred to me suddenly how excessively unlikely it would have seemed, when he lunched with us and looked at my Sudanese heads, that my next letter to him would have been from Khartoum; to have suggested such a thing would have been too wild a flight to permit one’s imagination, but I indulged in it now and wrote to him and posted the letter in Khartoum. Of course there was nothing unusual in all this; myriads of men about this time found all the plans carefully made for them, no less than the things they had intended to do themselves, contrasted as sharply with the adventures on which they were

now engaged as was the life of Jack in his mother's garden and the experience that he had at the other end of the beanstalk. Everyone's fancies had always run to such changes, as all fairy-stories reveal; but now they were coming true. In Wadi Haifa we found a hotel that was not merely welcome to travellers in Africa, but would have seemed comfortable to people coming from anywhere. From its windows we saw the Nilotic sunset that we had known of old, glowing orange as ever over the sandy hills. In the shops of the town we bought one or two of those satchels and purses of bright leather that they work so well in the Sudan. We went on next day at dawn. The sun rose just as we started, and there is no better time to start in a flying-boat than this, for the water that rushes past the windows before one is in the air is then turned all to gold. At Abu Simbul we flew low to see that marvel of the ages, the temple carved out of the deep of the hill, whose altar sees the sunrise on midsummer day. Of course we saw nothing of the temple's interior, but that I had seen before, and we saw the four colossi seated outside the gate and looking into the sunrise. I had written nothing for some time, for good experiences provide not only material but stimulant, but the drawback of too much stimulant is too well known for me to record it here. And now these four colossi led back my fancy to verse, and I wrote a sonnet to them which I reproduce.

THE LONG WATCH

Four kings that sit by Abu Simbul's fane
Facing the sunrise, you have seen man fly,
I said, and fancied that three made reply
(The fourth being broken at the waist in twain)

As we swept by them in the aeroplane:
Only eternal things I note; and I,
And I; our ancient river floating by,
The gods, the sun and, in due season, rain.

But we have seen, all three, and he now broken
Before he fell saw too, the golden ray,
Which in our youth from one rock had awoken

Our sacred land upon midsummer's day,
Has moved a little northward at its rising.
No other thing has been that is surprising.

We were in Egypt now, having crossed the frontier at Wadi Haifa, not that the desert knows anything of frontiers. It was still hills and sand, dark rocks set in gold. By the river lay the strip that the sakieh watered, ending as sharply as the edge of a strip of carpet, and there the desert began, and stretched away till it faded into the blue of the sky. We passed over a market in an oasis, and then the pyramids came into sight and we came down on the Nile. There was a certain light in the faces of those who met us, the origin of which was soon explained to us.

"We had our first air-raid this morning," they said.

But I could not help wondering if they quite knew what air-raids were. We went to that pleasant hotel beside the pyramids, on the desert's edge, called Mena House, which I knew of old, and even before resting I went to see the Great Pyramid, or rather I should say to be shown the Great Pyramid, for no one ever goes there alone. And, as the dragoman who secured me began to tell me wonderful tales, I was suddenly tempted to say something wonderful to him, something that seemed indeed to me to be among the wonders of the world, and I said: "I saw Abu Simbul this morning."

Of course the Arab may have been familiar with such wonders, but five hundred miles in a morning was still new to me and I still wondered at it, and I trust the Arab had in him enough sense of wonder not to believe me. And then came a note to ask if we would attend a party that afternoon. My wife was horrified, for, whatever may be the cause, flying the length of Africa is fatiguing, but she never thought of refusing to go to the party. And I was rewarded, for I met there my friend Aly Ismail Bey, with whom I afterwards had some very fine shooting.

And now, as I look at a rough diary that my wife wrote of these strange times, I realize that one of the requisites of an autobiography is to keep away from all diaries; for to look at life through a diary is not merely to fail to see the wood because of the trees; but is like trying to look at a wood by putting one's head into thick undergrowth. If there is to be any chance of interesting any reader with such a book it can only be by passing on to him, if one can succeed in doing so, the light of a few of those events that to

oneself appear to stand up above the mist of the years. The first page of a diary shows one what a vast amount of good material one has forgotten, and the next page teaches one that there is too much material to use. The other day, in this month of December 1943 an idea for a tale came to me, and I put aside this book for a day to write the tale, which flowed with a light ease, for to work with fiction after working with truth is to turn from a ponderous material to that bright essence of which the arts are made. Life may be said to be a heap of facts: art is an essence distilled from them, and that essence is truth. And this would seem to indicate that the reader who has followed through this book the slow movements of my heavy body, slow even when in a Sunderland, compared to the flight of a fancy, might do better to follow the track of dreams that have gone through my other books.

CHAPTER XX

THE BAYT EL KREDLEA

Travellers tell us that there is not on earth's face aught fairer than Cairo and her Nile.

The Arabian Nights. Twenty-eighth Night.

No, a diary, however rough, heaps upon writers of autobiographies material with which they can never deal: we met for instance in Cairo the famous traveller Hassanein Pasha, and Prince Mohammed Ali, whom we had once met in London lunching with Lord and Lady Allenby, and we saw something of Lord Wavell and Sir Henry Maitland Wilson, who had not yet fought the battles that made them famous; rather like meeting demigods while still they were walking earth, as you might expect to do in a country like Egypt, and even more so in Greece, where we met them both again.

We were shown over the University of El Azhar by the Chief Inspector of Science and Letters, Mohammed Khaled Hassanein Pasha, who first of all took us up to his office, where we sat drinking glasses of hot cinnamon and ginger with some charming old sheiks. After that he showed us over the great mosque, with its wide courtyard and exquisite carvings on the walls, where little groups of students sat on the floor by chairs in which sheiks were teaching. Then Mohammed Khaled Hassanein Pasha showed us over the library and afterwards gave us tea flavoured with mint. We may comfort ourselves at home with champagne, beer or whiskey, according to our tastes, but I know nowhere outside Mahommedan countries where one can get temperance drinks so varied and sweet as one finds them in the East; they remain merely a dream, which will not be realized till I travel again. Afterwards Yussef Reedy Effendi, of the Anglo-Egyptian Union, showed us the Rufai Mosque. All architecture is some dream frozen in stone, and in religious architecture the dream has a greater intensity than what one usually meets in other buildings, so all mosques are beautiful: words might conceivably describe the Rufai Mosque, but only if one was there with pencil and paper in one's hands; at this distance of time and space there remains only a memory of great height, dim below, and faintly illumined above by daylight, and a great border of heavenly blue at the top of the

walls, and on it written in gold those gorgeous letters that are like sabres among vines and flowers. The door rose to such a height that we saw a piece of the blue sky framed by the curved top of it as we came out, with white clouds drifting across it. All that part of the city was purely eastern, and domes over high white walls gleaming in sunlight showed the dream that the East has dreamed, turned as though by magic to marble.

Fuad Abaza Pasha kindly showed us over the State farm and its model village. White herds of Arab horses walked gracefully about the flat green irrigated fields, which are such a feature of one per cent of Egypt, the remaining percentage perhaps being desert. There are probably few better farms of the kind in the world, for it was from here, when there was some fear that the pure strain of Arab horse was dying out, that stallions were sent to four Arabian kings. Fuad Abaza Pasha also took me to a pleasant lunch of the Rotary Club in Cairo, the Rotary Club having kindly entertained me in other towns, on the usual terms, which is to say a speech after one's lunch. The Anglo-Egyptian Union entertained me, and I read them a tale that I wrote several years earlier, the scene of which is laid just outside Cairo. And we were entertained by the British Evening Institute, where I gave a lecture, and I hope that some of them may remember some bits of it, but memory of that evening is obscured for me by the memory of a cup of tea that was given my wife and me there some months later: it was so good, and we were so thirsty, that the memory of it eclipses many other memories. Two Egyptian ladies took us to see the Mouski, where shops run far back from the street and the dimness of their recesses is filled with all manner of merchandise, fine eastern silks for dresses, herbs, jewellery, rare scents, and more than I can attempt to describe at this distance. Outside in the street a stream of people flowed past, whose accurate description might take up the rest of the book, and from there we went to call on Major Gayer Anderson in his house, the Bayt el Kredlea. There is much of the West in Cairo, but inside the outer door of this house there is no trace of it; all in the Bayt el Kredlea is completely Oriental. To describe it would be to attempt to distil into ink the very essence of the Arabian East. Suffice it to say that in such a house, if one wished to know what was going on outside, one would be tempted to turn not so much to an evening paper as to the Arabian Nights. We sat for some while in a balcony looking down at a floor of inlaid marble in which a fountain tinkled, then went through doors of lacquered wood into an inner room that was no less lovely. Time and the West seemed dreams.

At the end of a full day, that is to say just about sunset, we got a taxi to drive back to Mena House Hotel. One should expect sudden death in time of war, and the largest tombs in the world stood at the end of our road to remind us; but we were not thinking of it at the time, when I noticed that a barrier which road-menders had put across one half of the road was unobserved by the driver. We were very close when my wife called his attention to it. Personally I thought it might have been better not to have interfered with him, for he could have crashed through the barrier more easily than avoided it; but my wife points out to me that, as the barrier was just about the level of his face, he would have been so much knocked about had she left him alone, that, though getting through the barrier all right, he would have wrecked the car afterwards. This is probably true. What he did do when his attention was called to the matter was to wrench the car across the road, and, though my wife was thrown to the floor, the car by some strange chance regained its equilibrium. We walked the rest of the way, and the driver wanted still to be paid for the journey to Mena House, and a policeman whom I consulted appeared to take his side, but the last word was said by the manager of Mena House Hotel and we heard no more of this desperate driver. One word said to me by a lady who knew Cairo explained everything; and that word was hashish. Driving in the streets of Cairo demands every moment of a driver's attention, for pedestrians cross the street there merely trusting to God, without any other precaution. But in the long empty road to the pyramids a hashish-eater could at last relax, and meditate on the beauty of his dream. That might account for not noticing so material a thing as a barrier made of rude planks. I can't think of anything else that could account for it.

Next day Aly Ismail Bey took me to Tel-el-Kebir to shoot ducks. We started in his car before dawn, and I was taken to a shelter built of reeds in the marshes, with two Arabs to pick up anything I might shoot. Aly Ismail Bey went to another shelter, and we stayed in our places most of the morning. We came away at an agreed time, and I got to the road first, where the chauffeur and one or two others were waiting by the car. Never having shot in the Delta before, I did not know whether I had made a good bag or not, but I saw at once by the faces of the men round the car that I had made a good one. I had got twenty-one teal, one shoveller and two snipe. I had a few more down, but the Arabs had not picked them up in the reeds. After that shoot Aly Ismail Bey very kindly arranged for me to be invited to shoot

with the King. I divided that day between two interests that have occupied much of my life, sport and poetry, for in the evening I gave a talk on poetry in the drawing-room of Dr. Rashad Bey's house, where the window looked over the Nile into the sunset. I talked of the poets that were modern when I was young, and that, as it seemed to me, were scarcely recognized, though they are now. Next day we had luncheon with Sir Robert and Lady Gregg and walked in their lovely garden, and that afternoon I gave my principal lecture in Cairo, in the hall of the Royal Geographical Society. I lectured on English poetry, but I told them that I looked at it as mariners and airmen look at the stars, rather than as astronomers do, choosing a few of the great stars that guide them. And in that spirit I spoke to them of English poetry, choosing the great lights that had guided me, such as Shakespeare, Milton and Herrick, and then the poets of the time of George IV, and very little of those who lived between the death of Milton and the birth of Keats, in the age that was mainly dominated by Pope. And of course I also spoke of Chaucer and Spenser, telling them something of England as Chaucer saw it, and something of English sense of fair play as it was understood by Spenser's knights, who unfortunately were not the only Englishmen to be confronted by powerful evil things. I did not speak of Tennyson, Swinburne or Kipling, for the simple reason that I found that when I came to Shelley I had spoken long enough to make a lecture. I did not know how far I should get, or how many poets would be required to fill in an hour, but Shelley provided me with a splendid stopping-place. After that we went to a late party, where we met many interesting people, but one cannot work too hard and go about too late in Cairo, for Egypt is always waiting to overcome strangers with many ancient curses, and after that I spent a day in bed. The following day I was busy again, and two days after that I went to Alexandria. I remember the sun coming up as we started, suddenly glowing through the newspaper that I was reading, and then a tree like a very merry child of a giant standing on its head supported by its hands on the ground and waving its legs aloft; and then the green fields of the Delta, for the crops were already some inches high, their brilliant green lit up by the white flash of the egrets walking about in them, and contrasted now and then with the cadmium orange and other bright colours of women's dresses. I saw two fellaheen in a field casting what looked like seed over it, but the crops were already growing, and I realized that it must be water that they were casting over the field. We passed a little white village of the dead, partially screened

from the train by a curtain of weeping willows; then a mosque with its crescent moon, and a minaret with three balconies of carved stone, and a bougainvillea covered a gateway with splendour. A child slipped off the back of a water-buffalo, in order to move its tether. Snipe rose and flew away from us.

And then the delicate masts of the dahabeeahs appeared like a wintry forest, and Alexandria rose ahead of us, looking very white and steep.

Alexandria would have shocked an English Air-raid Warden. There was of course a black-out, for Italian bombers came fairly frequently, though not on the night I was there, but I remember among other lights of that city a large door wide open, and a hospitable glow coming from inside a house. In Cairo on the other hand an entire unit of Air-raid Wardens would have been helpless, and must have given way to despair. I came back to Cairo through the delta next day, and the morning after that I went flight-shooting with Sir Miles Lampson, now Lord Killeam, the British ambassador to Egypt. Ambassadors have not time to loiter on the road, nor did we loiter: I saw the speedometer go to a hundred kilometres, and I do not now remember how much beyond. For part of the way we went across sheer desert, following tracks, and sometimes we passed eucalyptus and palm-trees shading a village. As Ekiad, where we went to shoot, was only about a hundred miles from Cairo, we were soon there, where we met the rest of the party, most of them Lord Killearn's staff, and then went to our places in the marsh. There was a bit of a sand-storm blowing, and, although I was completely surrounded by water for much further than my gun would carry, I had what was to me the unusual experience of a sand-storm in a marsh. Then the flight began, the biggest I have ever seen in my life, and my own bag was sixty shovellers, two widgeon, one teal and a pintail. My reader has probably never had the experience of walking along a jeweller's counter, or in his shop-window, but as I came away from the marsh over the desert to Lord Killearn's tent I walked over such a profusion of what looked like little semi-precious stones that I had the impression of treading upon a jeweller's counter. The total bag was a very big one. We all had a meal in the tent, and I returned to Cairo with Lord and Lady Killearn at the same pace at which we had come, that is to say a pace that was slow compared to flying and fast compared with other motoring. For this shoot it was well worth coming all the way from England, even by the extraordinary route by which we came. But indeed the whole journey was worth it for its own

sake, and the hospitality of Lord and Lady Killearn gave an extra sparkle to our long outing.

CHAPTER XXI

IN THE LAND OF THE HITTITES

GREAT though the hospitality was which I was now receiving in Cairo, there was a time when for my dreams there was no hospitality, until they found it abundantly in America; and this I remembered when I was entertained, the day after the big duck-shoot, by the American University in Cairo, not that I shall ever forget it, even without any further reminders. Mr. Howard and Mr. Hopkins called for us in the morning to bring us to the University, where we had tea with Mr and Mrs. Elder, and then I read my play, *The Gods of the Mountain,* to Dr. Watson and the students in a fine hall which had in its architecture just that oriental influence which would have been so welcome to me at the time I was writing the play in 1909. That afternoon we had tea with Major and Mrs. Elgood in their villa at Heliopolis, where we met Prince Mahomed Ali again, and Colonel Fielden, whose left arm was still rigid after being wounded four months ago, and Mr. Simon, who ran the British Council in Cairo, and who looked after us with the greatest care.

Very early the next morning, or rather while it was still night, Prince George, Lutfalla, a good sportsman, called for me and drove me to the Gezira Palace, where we had coffee and then set off, still in the darkness, for Mansourieh where we met more sportsmen, and went with the help of boats to reed-shelters. Still it was quite dark, and the only light we had came from the planet Jupiter. In the darkness we saw the black shapes of flocks of ducks fly past us, but none of us fired, because we waited for the King to fire first, whose guests we were. But when dawn came he fired a shot with a punt-gun, and then the shooting began. The pyramids began to emerge on the skyline out of a lilac mist, and pintail, teal, pochard and tufted duck streamed past.

In the evening of that same day we continued our journey, going by rail to the Suez canal and rowing across it under bright stars. Next day we came to Haifa, and amongst its olives under a hill that was crowned by an ancient monastery, with military preparations all round me, I wrote a poem which I append here:

AT HAIFA

In the unaltered land,
Where the world heard of peace
And did not understand,
See the old olive-trees
And guns and bags of sand
And soldiers and police.

After a night at Haifa we left it by car. In the street, as we left, my wife gave a small silver coin to a vendor of oranges, and he began to fill the car with oranges, until she had to stop him. There were always some doubts in those days about getting through Syria, but, so well had Mr. Simon planned for us, that we met with no difficulties. War pours people out over the world from all countries, so that it was no surprise to us to meet at the frontier a young officer whom we had last seen at Helperby in Yorkshire, when the objective was partridges. The French were not in a mood to stop us that day, and we got through without any trouble. Past good stone-built houses with red roofs we went with low hills on our right, and on our left the sea, and the white head of Lebanon peered over the low hills. And so we came to Beirut, where we had lunch in a hotel built on the rocks of the sea, and motored on to Tripoli. There in a hotel we met another Englishman, on his way to BudaPesth. Like us he travelled circuitously, but not so luckily, for he had been torpedoed off the Gold Coast a week after we passed it. At Tripoli we got into a train. Had time gone backwards? We had travelled in many ways, but here were comfortable beds, and men in the brown uniforms of the railways of France, waiting for a frontier in order to hand one the bill for dinner at the spot where the exchange would most suit them. We did not grudge the few centimes that they made thereby, if centimes were able to soothe them at such a time, any more than one would grudge two obols to a spirit by the banks of the Styx. We changed trains at Aleppo in the early morning and sat looking out at the view, so little of which I remember now; but there is enough for a whole book in a day's journey by train; the shape and substance of the land, the crops it gives birth to, the villages to which its strata lend themselves, and the men that make the

villages and that reap the crops, would make a long story, if one recorded them at the time, even though only seen by brief glimpses. I remember their bright dresses, many thistles among their crops, an extraordinary village like a capital of the ants, built entirely of clay domes, and then rock-built houses where the hills were rocky, and then the hills growing steeper, until we came to the mountains, for we were in the Taurus express. And I remember, somewhere about the frontier of Turkey, broken pillars beside the railway for several hundred yards, broken pillars that seemed to be of white marble, the track of an empire that had passed that way down the ages. I think we may comfort ourselves with the thought that no empire ever existed for long without good in it: violence it must have had; but violence alone, which is Hitler's principal contribution to history, seems to be not enough. The forum is one of Rome's gifts to the world, and Lidice one of Hitler's; the first of them positive, the second negative.

Next morning we saw small clouds wandering about the hills like sheep. At noon we arrived in Ankara and were met at the station by Mr. Michael Grant, who manages the affairs of the British Council in Turkey. He had been with the army at Dunkirk, but Lord Lloyd chose his men where he would, and seems to have been able to lift them from wherever he found them. He worked well in Turkey, so well that I have sometimes wondered why Herr von Papen, the coiner of the delightful phrase to which I allude, never took steps to have him *spurlos versenkf,* but no doubt his Excellency had some reason for not adopting a course that appeared to be so obvious. I think I may claim a great success for my visit to Turkey; but, if I do, I must give the credit for it to Michael Grant. Our train was four hours late, but we found time to wash, and then lunched at the Embassy with Sir Hughe and Lady Hugesson. Afterwards I went to a party given by Lady Mary Walker, whose husband was first secretary at the Embassy. I gave a lecture next day at the Faculty of Arts, and a suggestion was made which at first surprised me, for I had never met anything like it before; this was that for the benefit of those who did not know English well, an interpreter should translate every ten minutes or so. Michael Grant said that we could do what we liked, because, the British Council not having arranged lectures in Turkey before, whatever we did would become a precedent. I did not interfere with the suggestion and, strangely enough, it worked admirably. A Turkish lady gave the gist of what I had been saying every now and then, while I rested, and it was evident that she did it very well. Not only did I rest while she spoke,

but new ideas came to me, for I do not use notes, and the arrangement suited me very well. This lecture was on poetry. Later that day I lectured on the drama at the School of Dramatic Art, in particular telling them that it is an art, and not a mathematical problem, and that therefore a play is made out of dramatic events, and not by means of a set of rules, vaguely called technique. Later we dined with Michael Grant and Mr and Lady Mary Walker, and another from the Embassy, at an amusing restaurant called Karpish. Mr. Walker was perhaps rather naughty; but we had had some good news about the war and the restaurant was full of Germans, and he, seeing a lady he knew, scowled and shot out an arm in a Nazi salute. A band blared all the time and a strong man beat a drum, and afterwards there was some extremely brilliant juggling by a Japanese. I do not know what he was doing in Ankara besides juggling.

Next day another lecture on the drama, with the same arrangement about translation, and we dined with Michael Grant again, and a party of Turkish professors, at the loudly cheerful Karpish.

The day after that the Ambassador drove me to a small lake to sit for ducks. Stacks of grey bricks, not yet baked, stood about here and there, and for all I know the whole lake may have been made by the gradual removal of clay to make bricks to build places like Babylon. We waited in two small hollows scooped in the clay, and various kinds of ducks came by about sunset, but chiefly that goose-like bird, the ruddy sheldrake, which did not come very close until it was nearly dark. This was the first time in my life that I ever shot one of these fine birds. One of the Embassy joined us afterwards from the other end of the lake, and we found our way back through the dark to the road, guided by the light of a lamp that we could see on the car. I went in the second car, going back, and Sir Hughe Hugesson went in the first. Near a small house by the road a whistle blew and we stopped. It was a police-station, and people were evidently not allowed to chase ambassadors by night, and we had to explain. On this trip I heard for the first time some rumour of a mishap to Germans off the coasts of Kent in that September of 1940 in which we were expecting them, rumour of burned bodies floating in the sea. Some day we shall read in histories why they did not come, but in these days the student of world affairs largely consults rumours, and anybody writing and publishing what historians will one day write of these times would go to prison. Then Ankara flashed below us as we came over a hill, a sight that has the beauty, and in these days the

rarity, of precious stones. We lunched at the British Embassy again next day, and afterwards were shown over Ismet Pasha's Ladies Institute, where we saw children making various things and, most wonderful of all, artificial flowers; chrysanthemums, roses and sweet peas that could scarcely be distinguished from real ones. I knew that legend, and even historians, said that the Irish people came from that end of the Mediterranean, or rather that one of the many races that populate Ireland did; and that day I saw that it was true, for I saw two or three girls that were not only like Irish girls, but were simply the Irish type. While being shown over this interesting place I was taken into the kitchen, where I saw a packet of white powder and asked what it was. Some said starch, but an English lady said cornflour. I asked how she knew, and she told me because she saw a picture of com on the packet; but what especially interested me was that she said there was no other way by which we could know what our food was made of. Any disagreement with this view that I expressed was regarded not only as heretical but as ridiculous, so much so that I think that I am now expressing what will be regarded as a new thought by this age, however old it be, when I say that there are other ways of finding out how our food is made, and that they are most of them better ways. If the health of millions is not worth considering, at least the avoidance of war is, and I believe that war comes to any civilization that has a flaw in it. Our principal flaw is that the Government is afraid of any packet that is selling well, and does not dare hinder its sale, whatever it may contain.

After this we were kindly shown some of the splendours of Ankara by a Turkish gentleman, who first of all showed us the temple of Augustus, with a Hittite temple on one side of it and a Mahommedan mosque on the other. The hill on which these stood must have seemed very near Heaven to many races, for three of them to have built their temples here. Along the wall of the temple of Augustus ran an inscription in Latin and Greek, said to be the longest of its kind in the world: I forget what it said, as the world forgets it now. Stone Hittite beasts with wings stood near, and in the mosque a man was chanting to people seated on the ground a song of the nativity of Mahommed, written half a millennium ago by a Turkish poet. This is a song they sing in honour of a man when he has been dead a year, and to some man's memory they were singing it now. Then to a still higher point, in bitter cold, we went to where the citadel of Baihram looks down on the curved red tiles of Ankara, lying on the roofs like half flower-pots. Old

stone cannon-balls were lying about there, and many other things. We were told that Tamerlaine had taken it. Beyond the town was the plain, and beyond that the mountains, with a pale-gold light on their snow. It was a complete circle of mountains, reminding me of the splendid view from Peshawar. In a very small room on the top of a crag we talked with the curator and got warm at a great stove. Lower down, at a place called the Halkevi, we had glasses of tea with the Director of it, in a lovely Ottoman room, and got warmer still; and now the mountains began to turn to various tints of gold. I give the impression of an ancient city among its temples, with its citadel looking down upon old red tiles; but that is a wrong impression, and is as though when describing London one should put undue emphasis on the work of Julius Cæsar. For Ankara is a very modern city, more modern than the latest built suburb of London, for that clings still to London's skirts, while Ankara rejoices in modernity. Old as it is it cannot rival Istanbul's history, and can only surpass the old capital by gazing into the future and drawing some light from that, while leaving to Istanbul the dreams of the past, which are fading fast even there.

We left that night in a comfortable train, and crossed the Bosphorus in the morning and came to Istanbul. Michael Grant, who had gone on ahead of us, met us on the coast of Europe and dealt for us with the demands of our porter, whether rightly or not I cannot say, for he and I had only one standard in the matter, which was to pay aman according to his avocation and the work that he does; but there is evidently another standard, and it is not only confined to the East, that is to say payment according to the payee's estimate of the-payer. For Grant said to the porter, "Why do you demand a sum like that?" and the porter replied, "Because this is the luggage of an English pasha."

Grant took us to call on the Governor of Istanbul, with whom we drank coffee. All those who have travelled in the East will of course know that one does not make calls without drinking coffee, and very good coffee it is. And then we went to see the great mosque of San Sophia. And there we stood at what to the Emperor Constantine and several of the statesmen of Queen Victoria, and a great many other people, had been the centre of the world. At any rate it was the centre of one of the world's greatest empires, and a neighbouring emperor coveted it, and an English statesman thwarted him whenever he did; and there the Commander of the Faithful prayed, and the faithful were many millions, even beyond his empire. At this point I must

restrain my pen, which is not qualified to write the history of Byzantium, and I recall the words of a Turkish lady in Ankara when I spoke to her very sincerely of what the wonders of Turkey meant to me: “All that you are interested in is dead.”

It is as though San Sophia herself were dead, her immortality falling off from her on the day that the long fight ended; for the struggle between cross and crescent ended, so far as St. Sophia is concerned, on the day that the notice was pinned up on the door of the mosque that had been her cathedral, saying by order of Ataturk: “This museum is now closed.”

CHAPTER XXII

IN ANATOLIA

WE left the mosque of San Sophia with a memory of porphyry pillars, and a floor of serpentine, dulled, rather than polished, by millions of bare feet; and the great dome that above a circle of windows seemed to be resting on light; and gold mosaics, and two lost causes.

Then a lecture to some combined schools, and entertainment and tea given by the Principal and her teachers in a comfortable room.

Next day Michael Grant took us to call on the Director of the University, who told us that a great column standing outside his door was erected five hundred years ago in order to view fires in the city. The idea of having a fire-brigade was probably invented much later. Then we went to see the Blue Mosque, built something like San Sophia, only that the dome rests upon vast pillars instead of seeming to float upon air and sunlight. Four or five Turkish soldiers came in and looked round, but did not pray. They seemed a little disconsolate in the vast shrine, as though the latest of the tides of time had swept something out of it and left it barer than they had thought it would be. Another lecture that day, and the President of the Party and the Governor of Istanbul and others kindly attended; pure kindness, because not all of them understood English. Next day the President of the Party and his secretary called on us, and we naturally gave them coffee. He is President of the Party because there is only one party in Turkey. They had an opposition for a short time, but it was found to be inconvenient, and it and its leaders were abolished. The politics of Turkey are the work of Ataturk, and a chapter on what his politics were might perhaps be appropriate here; but, for one thing, I have not studied them, and, for another, I expect that most of the readers of this book will be democratic at heart, which might prevent them from successfully following those politics, were I to write a chapter upon them. So I will say no more of this great leader of Turkey than to tell one story that they told me about him there: he was sitting one evening with his cabinet, and, to introduce the topic on which they might speak, asked “What is Zero?” And one of his cabinet found the right answer, which was: “Far be it from me to have any opinion

on anything that your Excellency does not know. But in your Excellency's presence I am Zero."

It will be clear that I have not studied Turkish politics; and it may even leak out through these pages that I am not greatly interested in modernity, to which Turkey just at present seems so devoted; and yet I was charmed by the Turks, and cannot remember meeting any that I did not like, and I made friendships there which I trust that the violence of these times has only interrupted, to be renewed, I hope, in the days when letters will be sent and received more easily, and when the German ambassador shall have lost his interest in keeping me out of Turkey. Later that day we drank coffee with Madame Halidé Edib, who was said to be the leading woman in Turkey, and who is certainly a very remarkable woman. Amongst other things I was told that she had commanded a brigade in the war against the Greeks, and she was at this time running the Faculty of Letters, to whose students I now read some of my poems, which she had asked me to do when we met at my lecture on the Drama the evening before. Perhaps she is not quite so modern as everyone else in Turkey, for I remember her telling me of a modern innovation, without very much enthusiasm. "There is a law," she said, "that everyone has to have surnames now. My own sons have a surname, though I don't remember what it is."

That night I went with Grant to several places to hear Turkish music and singing, for Eastern music has a great fascination for me. At about midnight at one of these we heard a woman singing who we were told, as I could well believe, was the best singer in Turkey. At another I saw a woman with a face like the Sphinx at Gizeh, which may seem strange so far away in space, and so much further in time; but we are prone to judge customs and likenesses too much by the standards of one generation, being ourselves mortal, and we often overlook that immortal things like races alter very little indeed. Hitler for instance, judged by all that we have seen in our own time, seems far away from Attila; but the principal difference is probably only that Attila could ride a horse, and was in some other ways the better man of the two. Looking at the world from the racial point of view, I think one frequently finds a pair of people who were to all intents practically twins, separated by a few centuries and even a few thousand years. So one of this woman's tribe, wandering along the eastern coast of the Mediterranean may have served as a model, or was perhaps the ideal, of whoever carved the Sphinx.

Next day we were shown over the museum, once the hareem of a Sultan. The museum was closed for the war, but the Director very kindly opened it for us and showed us many beautiful things, too famous throughout the world for me to attempt any description of them here. Those lands that had seen the rise and fall of Rome, and were near neighbours of Greece, provided ample material for a very artistic people to make a collection that is among the great treasures of the world. Much of it was hidden from these troubled times by sandbags, but a bronze statue of a Roman emperor, and marble statues from Greece, and the tomb of Alexander, were still visible.

Then we motored east along the Bosphorus to where Robert College stands on a hill looking over the narrow water into Asia. There I gave a lecture about the travels of my dreams and my body, both in an easterly direction, and we were entertained with American hospitality, which is saying a very great deal, and we stopped the night with them. Next day we returned to our hotel at Istanbul, the Pera Palace, which later in that year was partially wrecked by a bomb intended for our minister in Sofia. I missed the sentry over our door, which we had at Ankara. Why I was so honoured I do not know, but I saw nothing surprising in it in a town where Germans were running about wild. The sentry was a lady, and sat in a chair outside our door. Wherever we went in the hotel she followed, and lunched when we lunched, whether it was half-past twelve or a quarter past two. She did it quite discreetly, and was very unlike a much more inquisitive German woman that we met later in South Africa just before we went to join a convoy. In that hotel in Ankara one day we saw the German ambassador with his first secretary. Such sights give one something of the strange feeling that a tourist on a bicycle may have, perhaps in the Kruger National Park, as he comes on two elephants beside the road, while a big-game-hunter may travel for weeks without finding any.

On that day my wife and I had the delightful experience of crossing the Marmora into Asia with Michael Grant to call on Prince and Princess Abbas Djellal, or Abbas Bey and Mme. Abbas as they are known in Turkey since it became a republic. How much I learned of Turkish life and Turkish poetry from him! And all the tales he told me were true, except when he once said that he was not a very good chess-player, a matter which we sat down to examine straight away in his charming library, where in little upright cupboards among his books he kept his favourite guns. This game was a long and very hard one, and I just won it, and in the many games that we

had together afterwards I never found it any easier to win, and sometimes failed to do so at all. In a smaller room there were beautiful pieces of calligraphy, framed lines in Turkish and Persian. Have we anything like this in Europe? Have we any handwriting that we would frame and hang on a wall for its mere beauty? Sometimes I say a few words on the subject of handwriting, but only among Europeans. For I feel that there is nothing that we can say of it, compared with what has been achieved in Turkish and Persian and Arabic. For in these countries calligraphy has something about it as beautiful as though flowers could write, or as though someone wrote down the songs of the birds in their own language. We had some talk about going into Anatolia to shoot, but we heard next day that the country was inundated and there would not be much chance of shooting. Luckily we eventually went in spite of this, and bitter cold as it was, and bad as the floods were, I cannot think of a shooting party I have ever enjoyed more. Grant arranged it for us and rather allowed it to me as a holiday, for the lectures had gone well, and he was the representative of the British Council in Turkey. The floods that spoiled the shooting made it possible for me to have any, as communication with Greece, whither I was bound, was cut by the same floods. We went back with Grant to Istanbul, and that day he had to return to Ankara. We came back from Asia in a snowstorm, and having travelled very lightly through the tropics, leaving most of our luggage to follow and not seeing it again for a year, my wife caught a cold which unfortunately prevented her from going about with me any more for some days.

On December 23rd I was invited to a concert of Turkish music, which I greatly enjoyed hearing. The audience was very small, scarcely a dozen, but it was very fine music. Of the audience I chiefly remember the military Governor of Thrace, a very pleasant fellow with the look of a sportsman, and not so unlike an English general, But I have noticed in my travels that one soldier gets to look very like another: Mars seems to grip them all in much the same manner, as a sculptor might make the same sort of face out of different kinds of clay. Some months later in Egypt I was told by someone who might have known better, that Turkey was coming in against us, and I felt quite certain that he was mistaken. And yet merely being right does not always prove one wise, and I had left entirely out of consideration the effects of the enormous pressure of German armies in Turkey's near neighbourhood. I was only thinking of the wishes of the principal Turks I

had met, charming people who certainly had at heart a better cause than Hitler's. We had been granted a transit-visa through Turkey, which ran for a fortnight. Ahead of us the floods cut us off from Greece; behind us, as it were, our visa was running out. To be in a country in time of war with a passport that is no longer valid is of course no better than being found in a bank after closing hours without sufficient excuse. Grant had thought when he left that the branch of the British Embassy in Istanbul would be able to deal with this, but it seemed to be beyond their powers, and we missed Grant as the lost sheep of fable is reputed to miss its shepherd. He had however looked after us so well while in Istanbul, introducing us to all those at whose bidding prison-doors would open or shut, that I was able to write to the Governor of Istanbul to ask for his assistance, which was kindly accorded. On the next day I crossed the Sea of Marmora with the Abbas Djelals, and her sister Princess Zeinep. The two ladies are of the family of the dynasty that has reigned in Egypt since 1914, and my host belonged to the branch that preceded it. From the harbour of Mudanyeh we drove to the lovely city of Brusa and stayed a night at an hotel, where the hot water is supplied by Mother Earth herself. But memory is like a sieve with too coarse a mesh: too much goes through and is lost; and, as Time shakes it with the years, more and more falls through. A letter that I wrote to my wife at that time from Brusa preserves a few of the scenes that I saw then, and so I reproduce some of it here. "As we left Istanbul the clouds were going inland over the mountains and seeming to drag at the heather as they went. I wondered why the sight of their clawing shapes gave me such pleasure, an idle thing to do instead of just being thankful. I decided that the reason was that I delighted to see a wild and ancient thing come so close to earth that it even touched it. Islands like Circe's appeared on our left. My hostess said she was born in one of them. The other princess was born here. We sailed due south across the Sea of Marmora, and motored here. Mountains with snow on them and a plain full of poplars. This evening a shaft of light came through clouds and lit the plain, lying along it like a golden spearhead, lighting the poplars and touching a mosque among cypresses, but leaving the cypresses dark. The north was black, and the mountains beyond the light dark grey to the east.

Dinner threatens and I must stop. We saw many beautiful things — a mosque with green tiles, some of them put in newly and pale green, others like old moss. And we saw a museum with the hand of Ozymandias in it

and the foot of his wife, and many Roman and Greek remains, and rooms devoted to writing in many scripts, and a garden with a plane-tree fourteen yards round, and the tombs, or rather the chapels, of twelve Sultans in it. One of them wished the rain to fall on his tomb, and a space is left at the top of the dome for that purpose. We saw another mosque, where an imam was chanting. We saw more than I can remember, and we saw a street with a huge tree in the middle of it and all the houses old and Turkish.

Karaca Bey. Christmas Day.

A happy Christmas. We left Bursa this morning and its olive-groves, and passed by poplars, and willows and an orchard of pollarded mulberries and went through rather wild land, but mostly under cultivation. We only passed about two villages, with houses close together as a protection against the wind, untainted by corrugated iron or any other modernity. Once we passed a flock of white-fronted geese quite close to the road. Once a raging torrent appeared to be crossing our road, but when we looked at it we saw that the waves, a foot high, were only made by the wind, and the car was able to get over. Great floods have somewhat upset our plans. We came to one impassable obstruction for the car, a broken bridge, but luckily only three kilometres before the end of our journey, so we were able to walk here. This is a little town untouched by modernity, but entirely burnt by the Greeks since the Great War, so that every house in it is only about fifteen years old. We had lunch in a little eating-house, while geese wandered over flying quite low, and we are stopping in a house in the town. We start soon for the evening flight.

We passed carts on our way drawn by bullocks, and some by small horses.

They want me to stay as long as I can. You know my theory about sport: you have to allow long enough to include a run of bad luck. What about a week? If I get back by January 1st we can't start for Greece before January 2nd. Perhaps not till long after that.

We went to a lake for the evening flight. We saw plenty of geese, but they did not come low enough and I did not get a shot except at one duck in the dark, which I did not get."

I said that memory lets so much slip, and I quoted the letter above, despairing of being able to remember a thousandth part of what I had seen, and yet I have vivid memories of the little farm-house at the end of the main street of Karacabey. For memories are probably the most vivid where one's thoughts and emotions have been most vivid, and in the upper storey of that farmhouse where we sat near a big stove there was the double stimulant to the intellect of two arts, chess and poetry. All the games that I had with my host were hard struggles, and when we were not playing chess he displayed memories of many fine pieces of Turkish poetry, which he told me in English prose. I have explained in my preface to *Wandering Songs,* a book into which I put many translations of Turkish poems, how easy it was for me to write these poems, for they were all given to me in English by my host, and all I had to do was to put rhymes to them. It is very pleasant to make poems like this, the first time I had ever done so, for at other times one has to wait until incalculable chance has sent one a theme that is of the substance of poetry and which one can recognize as being of that substance, and then one has to work that up into verse; but here was the rich material all ready to hand, given with the same hospitality that gave me that good shooting. His appreciation of poetry seemed equal to my own, his shooting a little better than mine, and if my chess was any better than his the difference was only barely sufficient for me to win with the hardest work of which I was capable. The farm-house in which we were staying was owned by a man who, as I was told, was descended from the conqueror after whom the village was named, Karaca Bey. Though customs have lately changed in Turkey, he always wore his hat, a bowler, indoors, because he thought that to appear bareheaded would be disrespectful to his guests. I cannot remember having known moderate comfort at a shooting-party before, for I have either enjoyed the luxuries of shooting-parties in the British Isles or have camped in desert, grass plain or mountain: this was about half-way between the two, but nothing could have been more enjoyable. The cold was intense, but it gave all the more glory to the stove, and in its welcome warmth I heard wonderful stories. Perhaps the most interesting story that I ever heard was told me by my host, as he had heard it from the Turkish corps-commander in the battle of Afion Kara Hissar, telling how in front of the Greek lines in the night, with his corps shrunken to a single division, he was listening to orders on the telephone telling him that the fate of Turkey depended on what he could do. And then he told of the battle. It was a

wonderful story. But I will not tell it here, for, if it should happen that many copies of this book should be sold, I should be making my friend's fine story common, without telling it nearly as well as he could. Yet one moment of that tale I will pass on, the moment when the general was standing on the hill not knowing what way the night attack had gone, and he suddenly heard the Mahommedan dawn-prayer rising up from the trenches of the Greeks. And another tale I heard of this same general, after the war, in Athens, sitting with Greek generals over maps, all discussing their war, re-telling their old plans, till dawn shone through chinks of the shutters, and none of them noticed it. A wonderful scene that must have been, this meeting in perfect amity between soldiers of these two races, one of them a band of conquerors that had won and ruled over so much of the world, the other a small race whose bravery is amongst the most ancient things in our histories and is now in our latest news.

CHAPTER XXIII

ATHENS

He cried, “Glory be to Allah, to him who hath rolled up the far distance for thee like a rug.”

The Arabian Nights. The Hundredth Night.

ONE night by the stove in Cevat Sezer Bey’s house I was told a delightful story by Princess Zeineb, of a dear old fisherman of Karacabey who had had an accident to his feet. The old fisherman had told her the tale himself, and I should have liked to have seen him telling it, for he evidently told it with much enjoyment, and the contrast between his happy telling of the story of his youth to a lady, and the bloodthirsty nature of the story itself, for he had been a brigand by trade, would have been worth seeing. But the story was well told, though it came to me secondhand, and I only do not tell it here because I have already told it in a long poem called A Journey, which was published somewhere about the last day of 1943.

There was only one field in the neighbourhood that was not under water, and there we sat for ducks after sunset. The house in which we stayed was the last one in the street, and close to it was a sheepfold: the cold had driven the wolves down from the mountains, and the floods left few places for them to go to besides Karacabey. One came past our door, and all our retrievers barked at it. I liked the touch of wildness that it brought to our street. In fact I wrote to my wife: “A wolf came into our street last night. I divide all towns and villages into two classes, those into which a wolf comes now and then, and those into which a wolf comes never. It made me very happy to hear it. We had a very hard game of chess tonight: they are talking over it still (11.30)... We are completely surrounded by floods. The wind would nearly pull the hair off a wolf’s back.”

Then I enclosed a poem, which was so easily stimulated by those delightful surroundings, and added “the town is running out of provisions, and here we no longer have milk. They say that several people were drowned. *Dec. 30th.* The wolf came again last night, and to-day we shot some woodcock... there was a lovely sunset, and the earth-light actually

glowed on the moon, which was exactly like the Egyptian emblem of the disc between the horns of a cow. *Dec.* 31st. I got ten woodcock today."

There was one road that rose above the floods, which appeared otherwise to go all the way to the mountains. By this we went in a car to sit for ducks at the edge of some oak-scrub, the top of which appeared above the water: here we waded on the higher ground, and lines of willows warned us of the presence of streams. They said that it was the greatest flood within memory. At the edge of it we passed a shepherd in his huge coat of skins with his sheep, on what was left of the pasture, one in every twenty of them wearing a bell. On other days we went further afield, driving across the country with horses, and then going by boat to taller woods, which were full of woodcock, and where a line of men beat for us. My host not only lent me an excellent gun, but he had also procured a pair of waders for me, without which shooting would have been hardly possible; but I was not dressed appropriately for the cold of that winter until Princess Zeineb one evening made for me out of sheepskins the finest waistcoat that I have ever had, as I thought at the time, and as I think still, though the British Ambassador in Athens looked a little askance at it once, when I wore it on a very cold day in his car. Those delightful days were a great stimulant to poetry, apart from the fact that the raw material of it was so generously given to me, as I have told; the wild land all round seemed to bring one closer to nature than one can get where pavement lies between one and the earth, and all that grows where pavement is; and all the scenes of a country that was new to me must have been a further stimulant, for strangely it is easier to see something when you have never seen it before than it is if you have seen it every day of your life. Above all I was with people to whom poetry was a reality, and not an almost vicious eccentricity. And so the last of any fatigue that may have been laid on me by the most hectic nights that Kent has probably ever known wore away, and I wrote more verses there than I had written since the end of September. On January 1st we said farewell to Cevad Sezer Bey and walked over the broken bridge and started by car on the long journey back to Brusa, over a road on which a car appeared a glaring anachronism. The floods had begun to abate, and, just as we left, all the geese were returning. In the few villages that we passed, some of the houses were actually leaning over, disturbed by the weight of the flood. Sometimes we passed shepherds near the road, always wearing their fleecy coats spread wide on their shoulders and almost large enough to have made a tent. So far

as I could estimate it the average height of all the Turks I saw was about six foot. And so we came by evening to Brusa again, and dined together, and I left very early next morning, and came to the harbour of Mudanyeh as the sun was rising among mountains of pure amethyst, making them like great gems in a gold setting. One of them was the Turkish Olympus.

I reflected there, as I said farewell to my host, whose hospitality had so delightfully blended sport with poetry, that if it took so huge a disturbance of the world to bring me there, I could scarcely expect to be landed upon the shores of that lovely country again. This thought, that came as we parted, I put into the following verse:

ON LEAVING MUDANYEH

A troubled world has brought me to this shore
Where, lit like amethyst, far peaks appear.
How can I hope to see it any more
When it took such a storm to cast me here?

I had been kindly given an enormous bundle of woodcock, so that I was able to give some presents to Turkish friends before we continued our journey, which we did that night. My wife had met a man who had come from Athens the day before, and he had taken six days in great discomfort, but Michael Grant's care of us extended over the frontier, and we travelled comfortably and in half the time. Early next morning we came to the frontier at Pythion and were met by the representative of the British Council in Xanthe, Mr. Vedova, and two police officers, who took us to their office where a fine fire was burning and gave us some most welcome boiled eggs while they looked at our passports. We remember those eggs and that fire with gratitude yet. From there we went in a little train through flooded lands to Alexandropoulis, stopping often at little stations to put down soldiers on leave among their families, that were there to welcome them. There I saw the old Greek profile, that is familiar from marbles, on a live woman's face, the perfectly straight nose, straight down from the forehead; unless it was the goddess Athene, stirred by the shadow of tremendous coming events to play her old game of appearing disguised in Greece. Great flocks of geese were flying over the floods. At Alexandropoulis we were met by the Prefect

of Police, Kirios Moschonas, who first of all gave us a banquet, and afterwards lent us his car for the journey to Salonika. When I think that this hospitality and great kindness were shown me in a land now utterly submerged by war I feel the sort of sadness that I would feel if I had been with friends at the seaside, and had heard that all their fields and villages had been overwhelmed in a day by some advance of the sea, such as comes to the East Anglian coast in the course only of centuries. We sat down to lunch until four o'clock with the Prefect and Mme. Moschonas, the General Officer commanding in Thrace, General Kotonlas, his Chief of Staff, and Mr. Vedova. One course we had was ample spaghetti, which I remember the general particularly enjoyed, because he had captured it himself. Should my reader ever have to make a speech in a language that he does not know, I can strongly recommend to him oozo as the wine on which to do it. Our little banquet, for the word luncheon does not adequately describe it, went off very well. Then we went on in the car up and down over mountain ridges, past obstacles such as floods and military posts. One obstacle was particularly impressed on my memory, a great rampart built across the country, presumably against tanks. What made me so clearly remember it was noticing that it faced the wrong way; not north-west or westwards against Italians or Germans, but looking towards Bulgaria. As we went through it by a twist of the road we got the impression of being even more hemmed in than we had expected to be. That night we got to Xanthe in torrents of rain, and slept at a small inn. Next morning Mr and Mrs. Vedova gave us a very comfortable breakfast in their house in the town of Xanthe and he and we went on in the car, stopping at a little wayside inn for lunch, which we ate at a table outside, looking at the mountains in the sunlight. Perhaps inn is the wrong word for it, for we ate our own provisions that we had brought with us from Turkey, which were of much interest to the cat and the dog of that pleasant cottage. And then the great head of Olympus seemed to peer at us over a hill, till we got close to the hill and it hid him, and again and again he seemed to crane his neck and look at us over other ridges. Again and again we saw the sea on our left, and at one part of that journey we had a glimpse of Samothrace. Before dark we reached Salonika, where we were entertained for the night by the British Consul-General, Mr. Hole, whose house looked full on Olympus, Pelion and Ossa. And a charming house it was, from which Mr and Mrs. Hole and their daughter fortunately escaped, and we saw them again later one day in Natal. I

remember the pale line of Pelion and Ossa, so pale that my wife thought they were clouds and Mr. Vedova politely supported her. I only knew they were mountains by one small angular fragment of their outline, too straight for the edge of a cloud, a difference that some modern pictures would never show. Next morning we went by taxi through the long city of Salonika, and caught a train for Athens in which a carriage had been reserved for us. There were no sleeping-cars to be had, but, if two people who have got a whole carriage to themselves cannot make themselves comfortable for the night, they are no travellers. That night, looking out of the window by chance, I saw the white head of Olympus quite close, under bright stars. There he sat brooding as it were upon his ancient glory, a memorable sight; or was he brooding on battles soon to be? Next day we reached Athens, eighty-three days from Kent.

CHAPTER XXIV

LITTLE VISITS

IN Athens we were met at the station by Mr. Burn, the chief representative in Greece of the British Council, and we were most kindly entertained at the British Legation by the Ambassador to Greece, Sir Michael Palairet. His kindness to us, and that of Lady Palairet and their daughter made everything easy for us in Athens, and extremely pleasant. We stayed in their house for a month, until we took a flat on the first of February at the bottom of Plutarch Street, which ran up a mountain, and the last house at the other end stood among steep bare rock. I can see that pleasant house, the British Legation, so vividly now in memory, that it is hard to realize that much of its books and pictures lie in the Mediterranean, and its furniture is probably all broken or pillaged. In that month of January, so portentous in the history of the world, the echoes of many events were audible there, and men connected with those events came and went, sometimes generals in plain clothes, not to be seen outside the Legation, and not to be spoken of by those who saw them there. My business was chiefly with books, and I lectured, as I have mentioned earlier, on those by which I had myself mostly been guided, rather than exhaustively discussing every English poet; but I realized that in a course of lectures there were some that I could not leave out, even though they had never influenced me, and the books by these poets and all the others, whenever I wished to consult them, I always found at the legation. Once I wished to refer to a memorable and beautiful thing from the Aeneid, the scene where Aeneas, guided by the sybil through Hades, comes to two outer doors through which dreams pass to the earth, the gate of ivory whence the false dreams go, and the gate of horn, which is the gate for the true ones; and they go out through the gate of ivory. I wished to verify this beautiful passage in which Virgil makes his admission. I did not know where to find it, and it was beyond even the learning of Sir Michael Palairet; but Lord Wavell, who was there at that time, knew it and told me at once that it came near the end of the Sixth Book. Had the Italians supposed that they faced what may be called a Bateman general, that little mistake may have been by itself enough to cause their predicament.

Another whom we met at the Legation, and saw a good deal of there, was General Heywood, the head of the British Military Mission in Athens. He struck me as a man who must have had many friends, and who could easily make more when he wanted to. I think they will greatly regret his death in India in 1943, when he was killed in an aeroplane crash. I hardly thought he would have been killed, after all he went through in Athens and in getting away from it. One day he had bombs all round him and was knocked down by one of them and his ear-drum was injured. I said to him next week when he came out of hospital: "You were very unlucky."

"Unlucky!" he said. "I am very lucky to be alive. No one that was with me is."

And we saw him again in Cairo, where no one arrived from Greece without a certain amount of luck. One day at the legation I was fortunate enough to start him off telling some very interesting tales indeed. It was in Lady Palairet's sitting-room, and Lord Wavell was there as well as the ambassador and my wife, and I had told some tales that I had heard in Turkey from the Turkish side of the Greco-Turkish war and, as General Heywood was attached in that war to the Greek army, my tales started him off, and I was very glad that they did. There too we first met Mr. Michalopoulos, whose voice is well-known to the world, which has probably by now guessed more of his personality than I could tell of here. And the world must have learned from him much of the cause of Greece. Who can estimate the weight of a voice in time of war, speaking the truth of a people greatly wronged? Lies need to be argued and argued over and over again. Truth only needs a voice. The voice was that of Mr. Michalopoulos.

One day the King came to tea, but to write of him would be to touch history, and I am reluctant to interfere with the work of historians, remembering that each man has his own job and that children are not allowed to bowl their hoops at the Oval while a cricket match is in progress. We made many friends in Greece, and I mournfully think of them now, living in the shadow of that vast curse that lies over Europe and that is called the New Order, and wish that I could do anything more for them than the merely negative trifle of avoiding any mention of their names. Vividly among my memories now, I see the tall straight figure of Mme. Leonidas as I saw her walking down the gangway of a concert-hall, where we had gone to hear Beethoven's Eighth Symphony. There had been a slight disturbance; people were going out and police were coming in, and Mme. Leonidas was

walking slowly towards the back row where we sat, and recognized us and stopped to talk.

"What is it?" I asked.

"A little visit," she said.

And then the police began to drive the people out, while the guns of Lycabettus explained what kind of visit it was. She explained to my wife that she had sons fighting with the Greek army, and that for this reason she would never allow the police to make her go to a shelter. The police came nearer and nearer, the hall grew emptier and emptier, and a determined look came into the face of Mme. Leonidas. What would have happened I do not know; there was a large number of police, yet I got the impression that they would never have moved Mme. Leonidas; it seemed like a case of the irresistible force meeting the immovable object. Then the police reached our row, but at that moment the All Clear went. Mournful though it is to think of Greek ladies that I knew, now that they live under that tremendous shadow, the thought comes sometimes that that spirit that they showed as disaster was coming near may uphold them yet, and may even be a force against which mere bayonets can accomplish nothing. For I remember the words that one Greek lady said to me near the end, when she asked me if I thought the Germans would reach Athens, and when I had answered her she replied: "Well, we must stand, and be prepared to die."

Her words came to me like a waft of the wing of victory, or like an old Greek warrior speaking right across the ages.

But disaster had not approached when we first reached Athens; the Greek army was still victorious, and before we had been there a week they were ringing all the bells for the fall of Klissoura. From a branch of a pine-tree by a little church that stood beside the Legation a bell was swinging vigorously, and all the way to Hymettus the sound of bells was echoing, and beating back to us from the slopes of the mountain. Next night while we were at dinner at the Legation we heard the sirens go, just enough to remind us of dinner at home, but nothing more happened. These were the days soon after Bardia, when Lord Wavell seemed still a little perplexed about the loss of an Italian general, for he knew that he had fought against twelve of them, but he could only find eleven amongst his prisoners. Passing Samothrace on our way, and then hearing the news of Lord Wavell's great victory when we arrived in Athens, I wrote the following poem.

BARDIA

As we came by Samothrace
Uprising sheer from sea
My fancy saw no trace
Of the winged Victory.

No light of evening air,
No shadow's fingerings,
Told me that she was there
Or hinted of her wings.

But further on our way
Word came, and we knew then
She was afar that day
Among Australian men.

But it was perhaps a more serious business than even Bardia that brought so many generals to the Legation. Victory was with us, and had appeared at Bardia and at Klissoura, but what would come from the north? Looking back on those days I find in myself a complete and cheerful confidence in victory, yet if I read the poems I wrote at that time I see that there also dwelt in me, or frequently visited me, some prophetic instinct which saw the approaching doom. I cannot explain this attitude, but there was a marked difference between the hopefulness that I continually felt, and all that I wrote in my best poems. I was enjoying myself in Athens, and yet quite early in March, when a swallow came to the eaves of a balcony of our flat, I wrote the following poem:

TO A SWALLOW

Swallow from across the sea

Come to share a house with me
May the roof above us hung
Last till you have hatched your young.
More, in days of such a war,
We can scarce petition for.

Perhaps by March 12th, which was the day on which I wrote this poem, the shadows of coming events had grown a little darker, and yet there was still no news of anything but victory from the Greek lines in Albania. For the matter of that, the swallow had some sense of something impending too, for after only a day or two in its old well-built nest it left and never returned.

On the next day we lunched at the American Legation with Mr and Mrs. Lincoln MacVeagh, whose father had shown me so much hospitality in America, and here was the beneficent hospitality of that family reaching me as far away as Greece. The King attended the lunch, and also Colonel Donavan, who was on a mission from America. In the charming library where we sat I saw some volumes of Herodotus and I told a story about that writer which so much amused the King that it might possibly entertain my reader, so I will repeat it: Herodotus had written, as I remembered, "It is incorrect to say that Hercules was a god. The priests of Egypt have a careful record, which they showed me, of all that has happened for four thousand years, and in all that time no god has walked on the earth. In that period the sun rose only once in the west, setting on that occasion in the east."

But a far more amusing story than that was told to the King, by an American officer who had been accredited to the Greek troops at the front, but had been shown very little and had been complaining about it. Then, he said, he went up again, and this time some Italians came over and bombed very thoroughly, while he and a Greek officer sheltered behind a bit of a wall. It was evidently time to go back, but before they started the Greek officer asked him if he was quite sure he had seen enough, and not until he had assured him that he had seen quite enough did they move from that very hot spot.

The kindness of the British Ambassador was not limited to the hospitality of his house, and he took us for drives through that wonderful country. One day he and Lady Palairet took us to Marathon, and showed us the famous mound under which are buried the Greeks who fell in that battle.

It was January 19th, and all the anemones were out, shining upon the mound and the plain all round it. On the top of the mound Sir Michael read us the account of the battle that was written by Herodotus. An old woman came out of a cottage beside the battlefield and showed my wife and Miss Palairet a letter from her son at the front.

Next day from the balcony of the Legation I saw a raid on the Piraeus, and saw one of our planes go down. I believe that the pilot of it was engaged to play lawn-tennis that afternoon, and the news was sent that he was dead: this war is woven more closely with the affairs of peace than any other war that any of us have known.

We were taken for other drives by the Ambassador, one day to Hymettus and another to Parnees, seeing lovely little churches sometimes on the way, and once having pointed out to us far up a mountain the cave of Pan. One day Captain Gilmour of the *Coventry* came to the legation, and kindly asked me if I would like to see over the *Coventry,* which was then in the harbour of the Piraeus. I went next, day and met all the officers of the ship, a pleasure which is clouded by the knowledge that it and the *Perth,* many of whose officers we also met at the legation, have by now been reported sunk. In the captain's cabin, remembering my rifle in Kent, I asked if I might have the loan of a rifle, should the Italians come over that day. The captain kindly consented, although the realization soon came to me that my request was no better than one to be allowed to play a game of stump-cricket on the ground at Lords during a Test Match. However, on that day no Italians came. And then one lovely day the Ambassador took us to Sunium, to the white temple of Poseidon on a cliff at the edge of the sea. There is a chart there at the edge of the cliff, with lines pointing to the islands and the mountains beyond the sea. In the temple we saw Byron's name, which he had carved on one of the pillars. The Greeks had chosen a good place for this temple that they had dedicated to the might of the sea. In marble and in poetry their fine fancies survive the ages, and it cannot be difficult for the Greeks living today to look beyond the time when the shadow of Hitler has fallen on their fair land in what must be a brief eclipse. And whatever he has done to Greece, he has never conquered Poseidon.

CHAPTER XXV

A RIVAL BIOGRAPHY

NEXT day we lunched with Mr and Mme. Michalopoulos in their pleasant house. I remember the lunch was very late, because there was an air-raid going on. I don't quite know how we had managed to get there unmolested by police or soldiers, but many of the rest of the party seem to have been stopped and taken to shelters. Miss Harty of the Legation staff told me that she was walking through Athens that day and made use of the magic words Anglice Presvia, when police wished to put her in shelters. We also were allowed to use that phrase, and it really did work like magic. Yet in spite of these words Miss Harty's policeman had reasoned with her, and she had said that she was wanted at the legation. "But do they want you to go through an air-raid?" said the policeman.

"O, yes," said Miss Harty.

"Very extraordinary," said the policeman, and let her go.

The commanding officer and many of the officers of the *Perth* came to dinner at the legation that night. One of them told my wife the story of the destruction of the railway station at Aden. They had captured an Italian airman who believed that Aden was laid completely flat, so they drove him round the town to show him. And there was no damage at all. But one thing he knew was destroyed and they had not shown it to him, and that was the railway station. I don't know if the railway station at Aden is a military secret, but certainly no trace of it can be found.

Officers of the *Perth* came again to the legation next day, among them a young Palairet, a cousin of the Ambassador. One cannot write reminiscences in time of war without telling of many such meetings, officers of ships that have gone down with all hands, soldiers killed in the air, and many other fine men whom one will meet no more.

Next morning there fell a blow on Greece that struck all men unprepared. Metaxas died suddenly. He had stood against the Italians when the Italian Minister had called on him at 3 am demanding that he should give up a large part of Greece by 6 a m., and all Greece stood with him, and he did much for the cause of democracy thereby, for he stood against a tyranny; but he was not himself a democrat; he was a dictator. Once when my wife

was talking with the wife of one of Metaxas's ministers, she asked if there was any longer an opposition. "No, thank God," replied the Greek lady.

She went on to explain that, though parliamentary government was of course excellent for England, it did not suit other countries, indeed she much preferred the form of government that they had had in Egypt under the pyramid-builders: "Look how long it lasted," she once said to me conclusively. Once a commission had been sent to find out if there was any oil in Greece, and reported that there was none. "Thank God," said Metaxas, for he had feared that his country might be ruined by riches. And now Metaxas was dead, and there was no one to take his place. The man who did try to fill it was not strong enough to control the course of disaster, and when it came he shot himself. I remember the day when that news came to us, first as a rumour, then as a fact, dressed up with a few falsities, and very soon as a truth.

Metaxas lay in state close to the old cathedral: in the old cathedral itself there was no room for such a ceremony, for it is little larger than a cottage, but a big cathedral has been built beside it, and there Metaxas lay and all Athens walked past his body.

We had no more engagements that day, for the whole country was in mourning.

On the next day I played half a dozen games of simultaneous chess at the Anglo-Hellenic League. I made a mistake in an opening and, as I played the same opening on two of the boards, I duplicated it, and lost one of those games and drew the other. In addition to this there was one other draw, which is not a very good score for six games of simultaneous chess; but I had a curious difficulty, which was that most of the sets were chessmen such as one often finds in the east of Europe, as Capablanca had once told me: bishops were larger pawns, queens were still larger, and kings were hard to distinguish from queens; so that in simultaneous chess, with sets of different sizes, what was a bishop on one board was either a pawn or a queen on another. But we had some interesting games, and I hope that some of the members of the Anglo-Hellenic League were as much entertained as I was. The man who had beaten me came to tea with us later, and we played some games in which I avoided the reckless move that had spoiled the opening of our game at the Anglo-Hellenic. He was a sergeant in the R.A.F., and I sometimes hear from him still.

When February came we took a flat in Plutarch Street, Number *4,* at the far end from the mountain, and were most comfortable there and were looked after very well by a male cook and a maid. From some of the windows we looked down on the gardens of other houses, in which almond and peach were flowering in the sunlight of the Greek spring. From the roof we could see the Acropolis and the whole range of Hymettus, and I never let a day go by without going up to the flat roof to gaze awhile at the Parthenon. No monotony is possible in the Parthenon, for it is one of the great things of the world, like mountains, and receives the sunlight and the twilight with a certain dignity which can never pall on the watcher; and, being so sublime, no incongruity is possible between it and the sea beyond it, or the mountains beyond the sea, or any storms or calms that time may bring to it. A memory that is fortunately equipped with the sight of that pale-gold temple will always be the better for it, and as the Parthenon is never quite the same, for its unity with sea and mountain and sky compels it to vary a little as they vary, the oftener one has watched it the more scenes there are with which to brighten our memories. There too I watched the mountains of Egina fading away with the twilight, above the gleam of the sea, and there I had glimpses of war, as though the world were an auditorium in which one only had to sit down and wait anywhere, and Mars would soon show one some scene.

As soon as we left the legation we began to see that Greece, at no time a wealthy country, was brought close to the borderline of adequate food by the war. We had enough to eat, but there was nothing to spare and, if our cook was right when he said that his niece was so favourably placed that she was able to assist him in getting the little meat that he got, the margin must have been very narrow indeed. Nearly all the shops that sold food had barrels full of excellent raisins, and little circular rolls of good brown bread were hawked in most of the streets, and there were more wines that we know of here. We could get tea, but we learned in Greece to drink other herbs besides, such as tea made from dried lime-blossoms, which I had once met with in France, and the *de montagne,* which I had never met before, made with some plant with whitish leaves, which I did not know, and sometimes we had camomile tea. Perhaps richer countries can afford to neglect these good things that the Greeks find on their hills; but with the exception of tilleul, which I often drink still, I find that I miss them now. But far sadder than missing anything which one enjoyed in Greece, it is to

think of all the friends that we made there and to picture the terrible privations that they must have undergone, and which they must undergo till the German shadow has lifted. Never has massacre been easier than there, where food is so scanty, and where a little ill-will can at once call up starvation. I think of the lady who let us her flat, and of our two servants, of the bootblacks who abounded in the public squares, so merry then, and of many friends whose names are best not written. And I remember among other friends a girl of about fifteen, and her mother who was the wife of a musician whom I had once heard play most imaginative music with great skill in a large town. The girl had met me after one of my lectures and had said to me: "May I write your life?"

"Do you by chance know anything of it?" I asked.

"No," she said. "But may I write it?"

"Certainly," I said.

So if another book should come out on the subject which I am now attempting to treat, it will be with my full permission.

Later we went to tea with her mother in their house on the other side of the mountain. I remember the room in which this lady gave us tea, distinctive and individual like herself. It might perhaps be said that any room in the world that is exactly like some other had something wrong about it; for, as every human character differs from every other, so their surroundings should differ a little; and, if they do not, it would seem that the human spirit has been too weak to have its effect upon matter. Certainly this lady's room was like no other I know of, with its deep and comfortable divans and oriental rugs and strange distinctive pictures. The musician is where the Germans cannot find him, but I fear that the lady who entertained us in that interesting room, and the girl who wanted to write my life when she was fifteen, are probably still in their clutches.

CHAPTER XXVI

RUMOURS AND SOMETHING LOUDER

SOMETIMES we walked up our street till it came to steps and still struggled upwards against the rising mountain, and when it could get no further we went on by little foot-tracks over the rocks, among cactus and asphodels. To the very top we were unable to go, because they kept some little guns there, which used to bark gallantly when enemies came in sight. There was a heavenly view from there over the bay, and away to the mountains of Egina. And of course there were cross-streets, trailing along the mountain their gorgeous Argive names, so that many of the inhabitants of Athens lived almost like mountaineers. A little to the east of our street a forest ran up the mountain, and there we sometimes used to walk, among small pine-trees and asphodels, coming sometimes on a little belt of untidiness which narrowly divided civilization from the wild. Then, by stepping over a few empty meat-tins and walking in and out amongst chickens, we returned to the augustly-named streets. And not only on the mountain did we meet with forest, for the pine-trees and asphodels slipped like dryads into the town itself, so that one could step from harsh pavement into the quiet and seclusion of woods. Many public gardens were to be met with too, and little patches of garden smiling with fruit-trees, before and behind the houses. Those that have read Irish legends are familiar with tales of a land where the golden fruit and the blossom shone on the branch together, but this may be actually seen in the squares of Athens, where oranges ripen beside their blossom in March. And just as one may pass from the civilization of cities to the simplicity of nature standing so close beside it, so also in Athens one may pass from the trams and the lorries of this twentieth century to the calm and the splendour of immemorial altars. For fifteen of the columns of the great temple of Jupiter still rise all white by the streets and the public gardens, where so many centuries have flitted by them like bats.

And one day Mrs. Burn, who was as much an authority on Greek antiquities as her husband, took us down the street of the coppersmiths, a street noisy with hammers, to see the temple of Theseus and Hadrian's library, and the beautiful Tower of the Winds in Æolu Street, and the ruins

of the Agora, where Socrates used to walk and ask his perplexing questions when he met with other men of immortal names. There are eight winds carved on the tower of the winds, each facing towards the one that it represents; and eight winds have blown on their effigies there, off and on, for two thousand years. And sometimes we went to the legation again, to lunch. It was always pleasant to go there, if only to meet our host and hostess, but we met many interesting people besides, who had various jobs to do to prevent that end of Europe from crashing into the dust. Besides General Heywood, we also used often to meet Admiral Turle and Colonel Blunt. In the end of course the crash came, but I think one can say these two things, firstly that nothing could have averted it, and secondly, that no evil power on earth can hold down Greece much longer; that is to say, much longer than the end of January 1944, the time at which I am writing these lines.

We went too to some delightful parties at the Brazilian Legation; and one day in the middle of February Mr. Meikle drove us from his house in Athens to stay with Mr and Mrs. Bailey at Copais, for they had heard that one of the principal occupations of my life was shooting snipe, and had very kindly invited me to shoot some in the reeds where Lake Copais had been, before an English company had run the waters off and put sixty thousand acres of land under cultivation. There they grew tobacco, cotton and maize, and in flower-beds round the house the violets were like purple carpets. Helicon stood in front of the windows a little to the left of the view, and the sunset shone on it from over Parnassus straight in front. We drove there past Eleusis and Thebes through a land of anemones. On the following day we shot snipe, while frogs all round us croaked the queer syllables that Aristophanes heard, and an Italian sportsman a long way off was dropping his bombs, with which the mountains reverberated.

Just beyond the garden at Copais on one of the foothills of Helicon a tribe of nomads had come with their flocks, and we went to their reed-built village where a large number of children came out to look at us, playful and wild as squirrels. These were the Vlachs, who come down from the north for the winter and go back to the mountains in the early summer. The day after the shoot we drove back to Athens, passing a battalion of Greek troops on the way, going up to the front in small cars which were covered all over with leaves. We gathered anemones from the low hills by our road, near Thebes, and returned with them to our flat. We could always get as many

flowers for our flat as we wanted: there was a row of shops under the wall of the old palace where they sold nothing else, or we could walk in a wood at the end of the street and pick asphodels, and friendly children straying from their homes with the hens would sometimes help us to pick them. Once we walked right round the top of the little mountain that stands in the midst of the city: a deep cemented ditch had been dug the whole way round, as though the people of Athens feared some wrath of Nature, which I never saw: it looked like a trap for an avalanche, but was probably a defence against violent floods. My wife went to work in one of the hospitals, and saw more men suffering from frostbite than from wounds, men from the hills of Albania. And all the while the spring filled the country with more and more anemones and beautified the gardens of Athens. It seemed to be at its full height when March came in, and hummingbird hawkmoths hovering before the flowers, and swallows soaring in sunlight, and the calm hills of Egina changing their colours above the sea in the twilight, all seemed to portend that Greece had nothing to do but to wait for the summer and the ripening of olives. But more visitors came at this time to the legation, and there were other omens than those that hinted of peace.

Soon we met Australian and New Zealand soldiers when we went up to the Acropolis, and lorries with British troops began to appear in the streets and little tanks raced through; and the Ambassador, who used kindly to come to my lectures, came to them no more. All through March the beauty of spring increased, the blossoms of fruit-trees grew brighter, the wistaria came over garden walls like a cataract, and a sense of doom appeared like a faint shadow, almost invisible in the bright light of our hopes. March 25th was Greek Independence Day, and on that day the shadow was no dim thing, felt only by sensitive spirits, but lay on Greece long and black before every eye. For on that day, and only for that day, Jugo-Slavia surrendered to Germany. But on the next day a people unaccustomed to surrender threw off the leaders that had misled them and stood as the world knows, and needs no praise from me or any man. I think that as one goes nearer the sun, that is to say what we call eastwards, though it is rather south, one finds with brighter flowers and more brilliant butterflies a greater warmth in human emotions; and so, kind though my welcome was in Greece, I did not find at first at my lectures quite that warm enthusiasm that the hospitality of Turkey and Egypt is inclined to lavish on guests. But on the day that this dark shadow fell upon Greece, so soon to lift for a while, and the floodgates

seemed open to the North and all the dykes of war broken, I said at a lecture how much it was to be regretted that Byron was not alive and in Greece, to write of these stirring days; but that, being the occupant of the chair that was named from him, I felt called upon to write something, however inadequate. And I read them a poem that I wrote upon Jugo-Slavia's brief defection. They naturally felt that defection very deeply: it was as terrible and unbelievable to them as if Scotland had turned against us; and so they were in tune to the thoughts that naturally arose in me, which is not always the case with a poet and any public, and they accorded my poem a great welcome. Next day of course the unbelievable was untrue; Jugo-Slavia had not turned against Liberty; and I obviously had to recant. So I wrote another poem, which, as I was giving a lecture on that day also, I read again. And they were equally kind about this one. Mr. Michalopoulos had read my first poem from the microphone with a fine defiance, so I now offered him my tribute and welcome to Jugo-Slavia coming back again to the cause of Liberty; and Mr. Michalopoulos broadcast this also.

So the dykes that we thought were down had not really fallen, and the tide might even appear to be flowing the other way, for the convoys continued to come and the little tanks were landed and went northward, after being inspected by the German Minister. Sometimes we heard them all night, going along Vassilissis Sophia Street. And once we saw a battalion from New Zealand going up, all of them Maoris, their colonel and all their officers Maoris too. We can say that no foreign race ever beat us, and yet I have a feeling the Maoris did. It happened like this, so far as I have read: Maoris were besieging some British troops about a hundred years ago and the Englishmen were running out of food, as naturally happens in sieges; so the Maoris sent them in plenty of food, saying, "We do not fight against starving men." History records a win for us in that war; but, if Clio were a sportsman instead of a goddess, I feel she must have allowed victory to the Maoris. However it be, both were together now, facing a savagery equally alien to each.

We were entertained by many kind Greeks in that month of March, both in the town and outside it, where vines covered all the walks in the kitchen-gardens; and all the while detachments of our troops went one way through Athens and Italian prisoners came the other; and a bank of mauve flowers bloomed by the church beside the Legation, and by the pine-tree on which its bell was hanging, and bees from Hymettus covered them like a mist. A

little way off there was another church, standing in a paved square among a few trees, and on two sides of it was a row of one-roomed cottages, in which priests dwelt, each with a tiny garden, a very peaceful place; indeed all the air and the flowers, the bees and the hawkmoths, and even the mountains and the evening over them, all seemed to whisper of peace, while fainter than a whisper there ran the murmur of doom among them.

By the end of March summer had come to the arbours of Athens: I particularly remember one of them, in the largest of the public gardens, which was roofed over with wistaria and small white roses. And April came in and the full splendour of summer; and another splendour was near, the splendour of war. We saw the lovely mosaics of the church at Daphni on April 5th, and the ruins of the temple of Eleusis: woods were beginning to fill with soldiers. On April 6th Germany declared war on Greece and Jugo-Slavia, and German planes were over that afternoon, and Lycabettus puffed away, putting rows of little white shell-bursts in the blue sky. Again they came soon after it got dark, and I went again to the roof of our flat to watch, and a lovely sight it was. Slow coloured lights went climbing up the sky from our guns, and suddenly I saw go up from amongst them the most gorgeous display of fireworks that I have ever seen. It rose up pure golden and curved out to left and right, and fell like the fountains at Versailles. What was this wonderful new thing, I thought, that was rushing up to the sky? For a moment I fancied that it was some new weapon of ours, for it was going up where the coloured lights had gone; but I soon realized its fatal meaning, even before the roar of it came to my ears and a cloud blacker than night floated towards the Acropolis. They had hit a ship in the harbour, and it must have been a munition-ship. Enough shells to provide for a small battle were going off all together. After that there was a lull, but the wreckage was still burning and many other ships were close to it. Let an historian write some day why steps were not taken to save the other ships: we only heard rumours. And late that night we heard something louder than rumour, indeed something louder than any noise that Athens can have heard since they built the Parthenon. I thought as I woke up that a row of heavy bombs had been put down just the other side of Vassilissis Sophia Street three or four doors away; not an unlikely thing to happen. But it was only a number of echoes beating back from Hymettus from a single vast explosion. The great detonations continued, echo after echo, and then moved up to the mountain like a thunderstorm going away from us. A ship entirely filled

with explosives had gone up in the harbour; and all Athens rocked. Our maid and the doorkeeper of the flats, who were awakened with the rest of Athens, discussed whether one of them should go upstairs and knock at our door and tell us there had been an explosion. In the end, for some reason, they had decided not to. A little while later a smaller explosion came, and raged away over the mountain, an anticlimax.

CHAPTER XXVII

TIME TO GO

ON April 8th Mr. Vedova arrived, with tales of the fate of Xanthe. Next day I gave another lecture, and the sirens sounded. There were more women than men in the hall, because so many of the men were away fighting. Not one of them left their seats. I cannot claim that it was anything in my lecture that held them in their places, for it was quite obvious that they were merely Greeks ignoring barbarians. That night the Germans came again, and stayed for more than two hours, and Lycabettus was very noisy. And later in the night they came back. And the next day the refugees began to arrive in their little carts, full of all the possessions of a household, pulled by small horses. The following day was Good Friday, and the raiders were over nearly all night long, and Lycabettus was blazing away. We were fortunate enough to see something of the Brazilian Minister and his wife and daughter in those days, because they took a room in our block of flats, thinking it to be somewhat solider than his legation, whose garden smiled at us through our back windows; but I don't think the modern bomb is at all disturbed by solidity, if our flats had any. What protected us in those days was a very curious thing. We trusted so hopefully in Victory, but we were really protected only by the dark wings of Defeat. Had the Germans, whom our hopes so flouted, not been absolutely certain of victory over Greece, we should have gone the way of Belgrade and all drifted away with the dust of Athens, but the Germans were so sure of getting Athens in a few days that they did not wish to spoil it, and their raids were for once directed only against objects of military importance.

Day after day we saw the little households of the refugees, going by in their carts; and then one day two streams of them met, going in opposite directions; and that seemed a bad sign. On April 16th Mr. Burn called to tell me that my work in Athens was now completed, and that for that reason, which after ail was an entirely sufficient one, I might be making plans to leave. He did add that one heard certain rumours, but did not mention what the rumours were, and we both of us adopted towards them the strictly correct attitude about rumours, and rather ignored that a German army was swiftly approaching Athens. This was a pretty general attitude at that time,

and the hint that I got from Mr. Burn that he had heard rumours was more than what some people got, whom I met and talked with afterwards. A Greek lady rang up that night in great trouble, to ask our advice, but we had nothing to tell her except the idea we had just picked up, of not listening to rumours. In London a man had said to me, "And, if evacuation should come, you will of course be evacuated with the legation staff." When the time came I did not bother them about it; but the implied idea that the legation staff would have any better time than anyone else, when it came to it, was merely like supposing that at a shoot a hare would have a better time than a rabbit. On the following morning I went to the office that was arranging evacuation, to ask about a ship. One or two signs showed now that it was clearly time to go; to begin with, I saw a company of Greek troops marching along a main street, and the officer commanding them rode on the pavement. It may seem a small thing, but search the capital cities of the world for the next twenty years, when once this war is over, and you will see nothing like it. There is something sacred about the pavement of a city; only rarely will a boy dare to ride a bicycle for a short distance along it; but when you see horses there, the sanctity of cities is over. Ares alone permits such a thing, and no other power on earth. I went on to the office and got the impression there that most of the staff had not slept the night before, and that applicants were many and ships were few. I was told that a Polish cargo-boat was starting for Haifa at four that afternoon and there would be no food and one would sleep in the hold, and a tired man offered to put my name down on a list for some better ship, should one turn up. I had to decide there and then, and I made a decision that I have never regretted since; I decided that we would go by the Polish cargo-boat. It is not only that not all ships got through, and this one did; but I would not have missed for anything the experiences of the next eight days, nor the company of the people with whom we shared them. Coming back to the flat I passed the Hotel Grande Bretagne, which no civilian was usually allowed near, and nobody tried to stop me; then I passed the German legation, within a few yards of which there were always recruiting posters, showing Greek soldiers with fixed bayonets, and the bayonets were always pointed towards the legation. There were at least a dozen of these posters, and the nearest two to the legation were usually defaced, but to-day the whole row of them was torn down. Athens was full of omens, and there had been some revolver-shooting in our street the night before: it did not need a lady with

tears in her eyes for the fate of her country to stop me in the street and urge me to go. That it was time to go I knew already, but I have never forgotten her kindness in finding time and energy at such a moment to warn me that I must do so. I told my wife that I thought it was best to choose the Polish ship rather than to wait for such things as comfort, and she agreed to do as I had suggested, and began to pack some small bags. Meanwhile I took our passports to the Legation, where all necessary visas were obtained for us in a very short time. It is a strangely terrible thing to see a nice house, beautifully furnished, tidy and full of charm, but utterly doomed. If there is any trace of ruin, any singe of flame, the mind is easily prepared for disaster; but when there is not the slightest sign of trouble, when the table-linen is clean, the carpets swept and everything in its place, then, if the house and all its furniture are doomed within a few days, and the lives of the people in it dependent on lucky chance, the imagination is called on almost with violence to picture what is coming, and the vision of disaster shocks it, as too sudden a flash will surprise and hurt the retina of the eye. I said some very brief farewells. What could one say? I had much indeed to thank for, but the future was so imminent that it was hard to speak of the past, whose pleasant days seemed all darkened by what was coming. I went back to our flat, where my wife and maid were packing far more deftly than I could do. In an open cupboard I saw all the dresses that my wife was leaving behind. Suddenly all values altered: everything that was being left behind was of equal value, like objects that cannot be saved from a burning house. A taxi was found for us, and we went to see the lady whose flat we had rented, who owned another flat in the same building. And what could we say there either? I had the very uncomfortable feeling of leaving a burning house in which others were left to burn; and yet it was not quite like that, for the Greeks had some chance of being allowed to live, whereas I was not quite sure what chance I should have had. One thing I can tell my reader, which was overlooked by all the four hundred people with whom we sailed in the Polish ship, and that is that, if he ever has to flee before a victorious enemy, he can carry one bag in each hand, as everybody knows, but he can also wear two hats. I had four hats in Athens and I very much grudge two of them to the” Germans, but two I brought away, while no other refugee had more than one. My wife had one hat, but for the next eight days she preferred to wear over her head a very large silk handkerchief that I chanced to have with me. With a sad farewell to our

maid and cook and the hall-porter we left. But all farewells were sad in those days. Tragedies such as the fall of nations were familiar to us on the stage; but now they had moved into real life, and the bright lights flashing at night were a real tragedy's footlights.

With such suit-cases as we could carry, and a basket of food, we went on board the *Warzawa,* that lay by the side of the dock in the Piræus. It had about five cabins, but there were four hundred passengers. I believe that somebody on board made a kind effort to get us a cabin, but of course that was impossible, and I am glad that it was so, for I would not have missed anything that we experienced on that journey, which we both of us look back on as the most interesting journey that we have ever made. And that is a thing that people are often inclined to say of any rough experience, looking back on it, but we said it even at the time, and wrote it in letters. I think that I had better quote some of those letters, to show that it was so, and with the more serious purpose of attempting to entertain my reader with impressions that are fresh, having been written down on the spot, rather than giving him only those which memory has preserved. There is usually much to be said for the second method, but to me it has always seemed that everything that happened on board the *Warzawa* was so interesting that it did not need to be sifted, like most experiences, by memory. And of course I realized that none of it is anything out of the way in a world that Hitler disturbed as a cake of soap may disturb the crater of an uneasy volcano. The world is today like a plain over which a volcano has poured molten gold for four and a half years and the reader will scarcely need my little specks of it, for his own experiences lie there too, rapidly cooling like mine. Yet there is some interest in all the letters that were written during that period, for they show that these things really were, just as we are beginning to lose our belief in them, and they show what we thought at the time: I made this reflection the other day when reading a book of the letters of Miss Tennyson Jesse (Mrs. Harwood) written during the Battle of Britain: they brought it all back and reminded one that this extraordinary battle really happened. This is the letter that I wrote on board the *Warzawa* to one of our nieces; it is hardly necessary to say that the comparison between our life in that ship and the lives of working men in time of peace is not to be taken seriously, if only for the reason that comparing what we were doing then with their surroundings before the war was obviously illogical, since most of them were at this time doing rougher work than what had come my way. And I

may add that my reference to naval officers, or officers of the R.N.V.R. was vague or incorrect, for I did not quite know what they were. They were the three surviving officers of a cable ship that had been sunk by the enemy in the harbour of the Piræus, and, as their clothes had gone down with the ship, what they wore when I was fortunate enough to meet them gave no indication of what they were.

S.S.

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Ap. 18.

MY DEAR PANSY, I feel one has not travelled, who has only travelled first class or steerage, the extravagant luxury of these two being practically indistinguishable; but travelling refugee is a new experience. The chances of your ever receiving this letter are not at the moment too promising, but I dare say you'll get it. I'm glad I didn't stay in Ireland while such an interesting world was at such a crisis, but it is perhaps a pity Beatrice is here. (She doesn't think so. B. D.) April 19th. The lives of refugees are full of interest. One learns what a lot of places there are to sit down, and how to be comfortable, with the help of one's life-belt. And one learns what good food bread is: water is grand stuff too, when you can get it. Everyone in this ship has lived a life in the last few days which would make at least one good book each. The Germans come over two or three times a day. Oh, how I criticized the food of the —— — ; and rightly too.

I wouldn't exchange it for the fare of a refugee, and a refugee's table-manners, which I just heard summed up thus — *à la guerre, comme à la guerre*; and to this is added tolerance and help. I expect most of us in this ship have a price on our heads. April 20th. Yesterday our escort joined us, and only just in time. A big noisy fellow. This morning I was given a wonderful cup of coffee, with milk and sugar in it, by a Czech. There was only one word for him, which was Nazdar! It is about the only Czech word I know, but the right one. They spoil me here: I was sleeping quite comfortably on the deck yesterday when a lady insisted on giving me a mattress. And last night they let me sleep on the officers' deck, also on a mattress, under lovely stars. Beatrice has a sort of a cabin, probably given up by two stokers. One can also get a bed in the hold. We came on board at

4 pm on April 17th. The people in this ship came to Greece from many lands, and in many ways, some of them by swimming. By the way, no more airs from — ! Her proletariat lives in disgusting luxury, missing the most interesting things in life. Or it used to. Good luck to Frank's rifle if the parachuting season comes round. Ap: 21 (4.45 p m.) We were attacked this morning and have not had a very quiet day ever since. Those splendid fellows the Italians have sunk a tanker, according to their own wireless; but, as I was a good deal nearer to the tanker, at the time, than they were, I can record that it is still afloat.

Ap: 22.

Just come up to have a look round after a perfect night's rest. A lovely dawn. Saw a lady "made up" a bit: she evidently thinks she is going to live. A hospital nurse once told me it is a great sign in hospitals — the first day they make up. There is to be no mixed bathing from this ship: women and children are to go in lifeboats, but not men. It is not a matter of space, but of time. It is calm and the water should be quite warm. In fact anywhere along the Mediterranean shore one would be bathing now in any case. Yesterday we had a wonderful afternoon from 4.30 to sunset. We were left absolutely alone. Everyone's spirits rose enormously, and we had a concert. We had not been allowed even to throw orange-peel overboard, as it could give our convoy away, and then at 10.45 am we were spotted, so we expected they would be sure to try and wipe us out, and there we were singing. The sun set, and then everything that I may not write about happened very suddenly. Nobody is calmer than Beatrice on these occasions, though all are calm enough. We lost no lives, and the convoy lost no ships. I don't think the other side were so lucky, but it was too dark to be sure. 9 a m. After our bit of bother last night we heated up our engines and are all racing for land at about the pace of a tricycle. Don't let this information out, because the Germans can, and would, find out from encyclopedias exactly what the pace of a tricycle was. This morning a sailor (officer R.N.) in reach-me-downs gave me two lemons, suggesting lemonade for Beatrice. I said I had a bag of sugar and went to get it. I had just got it when they said "Bombers coming." When I looked at the blue Mediterranean and thought of the sugar in my pocket, I felt like a treasure-ship. However nothing came near our

ship and the sugar is still dry except what went into the lemonade, which was very good. Yesterday while playing chess I saw a shoehorn in my box of chessmen and thought how useful it would be if I were ever to take off my shoes. I put them on in Greece about a week ago.

April 23.

Dawn.

I took my shoes off last night, which I put on in Greece. As a matter of fact I might have taken them off any time, as men were not for the life-boats and boots aren't wanted for bathing. I think the alarm yesterday or what we prefer to call the alert, was Tosti's farewell.

9 a m. We are so safe that you see people forgetting their life-belts, and a day or two ago a naval officer telling me his troubles, said how sorry he was at the thought of dying on a passenger steamer, doing no work. As a matter of fact he did lots of work.

Ap: 24th: 10-45 a m. Port Said. A sad moment. Two naval officers have just said good-bye to me and are going ashore. It is a parting that one really feels, and there will be many more. I feel this has been about the best week of my life, and that I was educated at Eton and in S.S.

Mena House Hotel. Ap: 25. Well, we are here. A man said to me "I was wondering if you would arrive here." I said "So was I."

Yours affly.

D.

And I have found some more memories of that trip in a letter to a friend in Devon who had written to me at that time about my latest Jorkens book, and I had made a copy of my letter to prevent the memories drifting to oblivion with so many others.

PYRAMIDS, CAIRO, EGYPT.

May 31, 1941.

DEAR MRS. KELLY, I've just got your letter of Nov. 27th. Please excuse pencil, but the thermometer suddenly dropped to 80 a week ago, which is dangerous out here, and more than one of us have bad colds. It happened at sunset and I ought to have known much better. My wife and I were living in incredible safety in Ireland up to last August; and then, jealous of Jorkens, I suppose, and unable to appreciate a moderately good thing while we had it, we gave it up in disgust and since then have been living a life rather more adventurous than Jorkens, and, though it may not be quite suited to the sixties, we have certainly enjoyed it.

I hadn't shot a tiger since 1930, nor even a stag for some years, and just when my big rifles were beginning to seem like a memory I got them out and joined the L.D.V. in Kent, where we have a small house. That was on August 13th. We arrived on August 14th, and nothing happened. On Aug: 15th there started what some American papers called one of the decisive battles of the world. We went to church next day, and said to our neighbours, "Are the battles you get here usually much like yesterday's?" And they said it was their first. So we got there in time, and I should have been very sorry if we hadn't. It wasn't the last: in fact we had one every day: we lived under Goering's high road. My humble duties were those of a keeper's dog, going round after a big shoot to see what he can pick up. Plenty of winged stuff came down, but never the kind we were looking for. By night they bombed us. One day they wanted to see me at the Colonial Office; so Goering and I went in to London, and there Lord Lloyd asked me if I would go to Greece, and I said Yes, but might I have a secretary? So my wife was included in the trip.

Goering and I went back, and on October 16th we took part in the battle of Euston, which was our last battle for a long time: we had had some every day since Aug: 14th, including the two really lovely ones of Sept. 15th and Sept. 27th, and our nights were always noisy. We left Glasgow in a liner, and Lord knows where it went, till we saw the west coast of Africa, and a good many flying fishes; and then one night we saw a town with all its lights shining, and that was Capetown. Later on we saw Durban, also gleaming. From Durban we flew pretty well the whole length of Africa, to the great surprise of the elephants, and the contempt of the stone kings sitting outside Abu Simbul. I shot ducks with a live king in Egypt, and went on, through Palestine and Syria to Turkey, where I was wonderfully

entertained with more shooting in an Anatolian village and the literal wolf used to come to the door at night. Then Greece, and spring, and the flowers coming up, and a sense of doom over them all. Nights grew noisier, the sense of doom increased, and one day (with my work just finished only the day before) it was clearly time to go. Then began the most interesting time we had had since we left Ireland. We left on a Polish cargo-boat just as the final smashing of the Piraeus started. We were in a convoy with a splendid escort, and had two machine-guns on board and six men of the 8th Hussars; and we needed all the help that we got. It took us a week and they hunted us most of the way. It was lovely weather, which entirely compensated for the order that men were not to go in the life-boats. It was a sea that I should not at all have minded walking into. But by 18 inches, by which a torpedo missed us, we did not have to. I think our Hussars twice saved the ship, and how often our escort saved it there is no knowing. One pilot got right over us at a hundred and fifty feet. Of his bones are coral made.

Yours sincerely,
DUNSANY.

P.S. — Any address I have is c/o British Council, 3 Hanover Street, London, W.1.

One more letter I will add that tells of this time, a letter that I wrote to Lady Jersey as soon as we reached Cairo.

MENA HOUSE HOTEL, PYRAMIDS, CAIRO.

April 25 1941.

DEAR LADY JERSEY, Beatrice, who has been sleeping in the same pair of boots for a week, is now resting without them, in a comfortable bed. She is beginning to adopt the view of Anatole France's dog— "wherever I am, I am in the middle of it all." Because the day after we arrived in Kent, Kent became one of the world's hottest spots, and when we were off the West of Ireland was the worst week of the war at sea (198,000 tons), and when, after a fine rest we went to Greece, things warmed up there, and when we left it the sea was distinctly hot. I said good-bye to Sir Michael Palairet on April

17th with his life's work crashing about him (and nobody worked harder), and got on board a Polish cargo-boat with Beatrice, and such clothing and food as we could carry, at 4 p m. Then began about the most interesting week of our lives. We hung about the seas for some time before our splendid escort came up, which it did just in time to save us. Then attacks ceased for awhile, but we were not allowed to throw even cigarette-ends overboard, for fear that we should be tracked. Seagulls especially might have given us away. And then on Monday morning we were found out, under a blue sky with one cloud in it, and in that cloud was a Stuka. No sirens at sea, and our only intimation was a roar from our machine-gunner, and the bomber swerved on to the next ship. I suppose I may give you information that has already been given to the world by the Italian wireless, which is that they sank the ship; but it is a lie. We didn't feel too pleased to have been found out. Then they came again, and it looked like a fleet action, but they didn't actually attack our ship this time. After that we had some wonderful hours of rest, and hopes rose so high that we had a concert, which we enjoyed enormously. But the sun set and they came straight for our ship. Our splendid escort roared away at about the pace of two dogs growling in a dogfight, even while one of them was just over our mast-head. Had he dropped some bombs he could scarcely have missed us, or he could have swept our deck with his machine-guns; but he fired a torpedo instead, and missed. No one quite knows why he did not fire with his machine-guns. One theory is that he died just at the wrong moment. That is what our machine-gunners believe. I never saw calmer weather or a bluer sea. Men were not for the life-boats; there would not have been time. But there were plenty of ships near us, and I recollected all the time that it was the height of the Mediterranean bathing-season, a very different matter from the Atlantic. In spite of which one or two men stupidly argued that they ought to have a seat in a life-boat, because it said so in a notice on the wall of their cabin!

I will conclude with a poem.

Think not that Adolf Hitler lives in vain.
The kindness, the humanity, the care,
The help that nearly helpless people share,
The sympathies, that he forbids on pain
Of banishment, between the Northern strain
And those that to Jerusalem turn in prayer,

All he denies and crushes everywhere,
Now rise exultantly, as ne’er again.
And when I have seen weary refugees
(Honoured, myself, with their companionship)
Helping each other upon dangerous seas,
Facing all chances in a hunted ship,
Then have I looked on spiritual things
Like mighty angels spreading rainbow wings.
Yours affly,

D.

CHAPTER XXVIII

A MEDITERRANEAN CRUISE

Strong through the turbulent profound Shoots Xiphias to his aim.

CHRISTOPHER SMART.

Now let me tell the story of our journey from Athens as I remember it, looking back on it, whether I repeat what I may have already said in some letter, or even whether I contradict it. What I wrote nearer the time may have some brighter gleam of truth on it, but there must have been something fairly vivid about what I remember now, or it would not be still in my memory. That is probably the best way to write one's memoirs, supposing there is any need to write them at all (which I do not pretend there is); to let a few years go by and then to collect those moments that time has sifted and put them into a book. That is one way of distinguishing the interesting from the commonplace, though once again I record my awareness that all I have seen is commonplace in an age when what would once have made a book of adventure is the everyday experience of countless lives.

We went up a steep plank over the side of the ship, and found ourselves among many friendly people, most of whom had the air of looking forward to an interesting adventure. About twenty wrecks lay round us, and the battered docks beside us reminded us that where we were was very much of an objective to the enemy. The sirens wailed for a while, and a few bombs were dropped, but a long way off. We waited till nightfall and then left the Piræus. The moon was waning, but was a bit larger than we liked. I remember walking the deck by the light of it with an Australian, who made to me the delightful remark, "I always wanted to do a Mediterranean cruise." There were partitions in the hold with several bunks, on which were mattresses made of straw, and there we most of us slept. Straw is quite comfortable and I often slept in one of the partitions, though sometimes I slept on the deck for a change. It was as warm as an English summer, so the deck was quite comfortable too, especially when one of the Polish officers very kindly gave me a mattress. We sailed under the hills of Egina, very slowly, and yet some of them did gradually drop behind us; and we were glad to have left those battered docks. But with dawn an ominous look came

into the face of the hills, a look like a dream of the night which has come to trouble the day, and a second glance showed them to be the hills that we thought we had left, and we were back in the harbour of Athens among the wrecks again. That day the captain bought some bread, which was very welcome, for the ship had no provisions for passengers. Rumours came on board our ship, sometimes even rumours of victory, and my wife recorded in her diary that German prisoners had marched through Athens instead of the German army; but she added, "All news is terrible though, pointing to the return of the Dark Ages." She is not given to exaggeration, and the approach of such people as were now coming from the North among the cities of Greece did indeed suggest that, if history repeats itself, that was the terrible old story that Clio was going to retell. The sirens sang their familiar songs, and we stayed in the harbour all day. One man told me towards evening that he saw, and had read, a message flashed to us in Morse, ordering us to start. If it was not from a spy, it was presumably sent for the benefit of spies, so that they might tell whoever might be waiting for us that we were about to start. But our captain took no notice of it. That night we set out before the moon rose, and were on our way again, but we never shook off the sight of low hills, and at dawn we were among the wrecks and the sirens again. That day we heard that Corizis had shot himself. In the afternoon the bombers, that had not troubled us yet, came right over us. But our great escort, H.M.S. *Carlisle,* had now arrived and she let out one roar, and the sound of the engines above us faded at once away. Athens was all grey, and clouds heaped heavily along Hymettus hid the sun. Even the Parthenon, for once, seemed dull. And then at the western end of Hymettus there came one rift in the clouds and the sun shone through and touched the Parthenon, which flashed with all its splendour from the Acropolis, and we started under the protection of the *Carlisle* and, as it were, blessed by Athene, and the sirens wailed as we went, for what rumour afterwards told us was the final and worst attack on the Piraeus. And as our convoy, and all the good ships that protected it, left the bay we saw the distant gleam of the temple of Poseidon at Sunium, to whom, had we been pagan, we should have owed much blood and spice; for never can the Mediterranean have known a calmer week, and the vast blue circle shone round us every day like a sapphire.

How they fed us I have not the slightest idea, but I have a very vivid memory that they did so. Rumour told us that they had some carcases of

sheep in the hold, and I have already mentioned that the captain bought bread in Athens. But the food could never have been eked out among us as it was had not a young Greek, Tsigante, and others, organized a system. From the moment this system got working we had regular meals: we ate in shifts and had ten minutes for each shift. For breakfast we had good brown bread and coffee and, for those who liked it, something out of a tin that went by the name of jam. But the great stand-by of the day was the admirable mutton soup that we had for lunch, when we again also had bread. The cook had once been a captain in the old army of Russia. Of his life as a soldier I know nothing, but I shall never forget his cooking. I remember his smiles above his great moustache, which must have welled up from the satisfaction of knowing how much he was doing for four hundred people who would have fared ill without him. For supper we again had bread, and on alternate days bully beef and, on the less favoured days, tinned salmon. Thus hunger was successfully kept away from us, but it would not have been, without the energy and organization of Tsigante and the British officers of the ship that had been sunk in the harbour, who helped in everything. And Greek ladies volunteered to wait at breakfast, English at luncheon, and Serbs and Poles at supper. And many ladies washed the plates after every meal and between each shift. It took me a little time to find out that one could not take a dish-cloth or a broom away from a lady, for they clung to these things, and the only way that one could do any work was to find a broom or some dirty plates for oneself before anyone else had got hold of them. I reasoned with some of these hard-working ladies and said to one of them, “My most precious possession is my character, and you are ruining it, by doing all this work for us while I sit idle.”

But I still found that I had to be very alert and quick to find any work to do before it had been snapped up by these ladies who, in the matter of one’s duty towards one’s neighbour, had nothing to learn from sermons. There was no food for the first day or two, but Mr. Radijowich, a Montenegrin old soldier who had fought at Verdun, somehow charmed for us a sausage roll and a glass of water with the graceful ease of a conjurer, and by Sunday Mr. Tsigante’s system was working. Sunday was a sad and memorable day, for it was the Greek Easter, the Easter that the Orthodox Church fixes by the Gregorian calendar, and all the Greeks met in the little saloon and sang the hymns that they had been accustomed to sing on this day every year in their

churches, bright with ikons and small lamps. With tears running down their faces they sang beautifully. Only one shot was fired that day, a solitary cannon-shot from a neighbouring ship.

There were seats for about ten people, but comfort is a thing that may be found in many places when sought for, and a heap of luggage with a tarpaulin over it provided us with many resting-places, and several dogs made themselves as comfortable there as we did. There another captain in the old Russian army, now an artist, discussed philosophy, as did many others, for we counted eighteen nationalities on board, so that we had many views on life, and, as many of our fellow-passengers on the *Warzawa* had little left to them of material things, their philosophy became all the purer. Dogs are rare in ships, but disaster makes strange fellow-travellers, and we had many dogs with us, and they neither fought with each other nor barked at any of the hundreds of strangers they saw all round them, for there was the sort of truce among them that Kipling tells of among the animals in India when the great drought lay over the land and the Council rock was bare. Every evening a little group of seven or eight men used to gather in the stem of the ship and sing quietly together. They sang so beautifully that I used to go and listen; and they sang till the stars came out. They were the Czechs, singing songs of their country. And there was a party of English people from Belgrade, who had a double reason for getting away; for there is a quaint German law that crimes against Hitler committed in any land are all equally punishable, and these had sinned against him in Jugo-Slavia as well as in Greece. And then there was a very pleasant doctor who used to practise in Austria, but he was a Jew and counted as game in the New Order, so the Nazis hunted him and he had fled to Greece. Now he had to flee again and look for a new country. His wife and two boys were with him. The boys played, as all boys played in all ships in which I have travelled during this war, at soldiers having a battle; and whenever real battles provided them with empty cartridges, and some bullets to put in them (however they got them), they played with all the more zest.

Six men of the 8th Hussars were with us, with two machine-guns amongst them, and up to Sunday they had had nothing to do. My wife in her rough diary records that we went very slowly, so as not to pass Crete by daylight. But the speed of the *Warzawa,* so far as we knew, was 5 knots, though we did hear a rumour one day that her engineer had got her up to 7. This indicates an exaggeration in one of my letters, in which I asserted that

we attained the speed of a tricycle. The diary records "some alarms" that day; but, if there were any, they were so mild that they have no place in my memory, and, as I have already mentioned, only one shot was fired that day. We were in a very inland sea, and it would certainly have been a good thing if we could have slipped by Crete in the night and away from the baleful influence of the Dodecanese; but when dawn came on Monday there was a grey headland very clear to be seen. We were guarded by two destroyers besides the *Carlisle,* and two Greek submarines, and were soon joined by a French cruiser and the Greek battle-cruiser the *Averof* We somehow got the idea that the great *Averof* was no longer in her prime, and, had I been writing of this journey an epic poem in the style of Sir Walter Scott, I might have said of her:

The guns, her sole remaining joy,
Were loaded by an orphan boy.

But we later read of her doing good service in the Far East. That morning at about 11 I was sitting on the deck, when I heard a stream of machine-gun bullets above me from one of our 8th Hussars on the upper deck. There was a cloud in the blue of the Mediterranean sky, and out of it had come two Stukas, but there was something about the machine-gun bullets that seemed to surprise them, and they swerved, as a snipe will sometimes do from a shot, to the scorn of our machine-gunner, and attacked the next ship instead.

"They've got no guts," said our 8th Hussar contemptuously.

Then came the old Woof, Woof, Woof, that reminded us of home, and the crew of the next ship took to the boats. But very soon they found things were not as bad as they thought, and rowed back again. Then appeared a very mournful sight indeed, the ship that had been alongside us, a tanker, dropping back crippled and alone, apparently a prey to whatever might lurk hyenalike on the track of our retreat. But in the end she didn't sink, and somebody gave her a tow, and later we were delighted to hear that she was safely towed in to Port Said. As our Hussars came down from the upper deck, one of our fellow-refugees who had got a flask said, "You saved us from drinking salt water. Have a drink."

That fight was soon over, and the bombers flew home to their wireless and told it all about what they had done. A little later a small crowd of us was listening to the news in Italian, which was being translated for different

groups by four interpreters. A quarter of the crowd burst out laughing. Then it was translated into another language, and another quarter broke into laughter: the third translator was English, and he also was greeted with laughter, for the Italians were telling how they had attacked a convoy off Crete and sunk one of the ships. But before this happened they had another try, which lasted quite a long time and much interfered with our lunch, which was not served while the guns were firing, and very hard they fired and very successfully, for they kept the enemy a good way off, on our port side, where the shells were bursting thick and low. We expected this second attack, once we had been found out, but what surprised us, and what as the afternoon wore away began to please us, was that unaccountably they did not return to finish the job. I played a game of chess with a man from Prague and then one or two more: one of these games I lost, and I began to wonder if I had had enough sleep, though I had felt no other symptom of sleepiness. We played yet another game and I nearly lost that one too, but then he made a mistake which seemed to indicate that he had not slept so well as I had. I think talk kept us up late, and dawn seemed to come early. As there was not a great deal to eat, and nothing else to do for a week, we got through a good deal of talk on that journey. Still the bombers did not return. I asked one of the British officers why, having found us, they did not come back with a pretty large force; but he could find no reason for their not doing so. As the afternoon slipped away and the sun went low, a certain spirit of celebration began to be felt, and Captain Paltov, the Russian painter, brought out a cold chicken, and a Canadian lady produced some tinned pears, things that thy wife recorded in her diary, for they were of great importance in those days. The sun sank lower still, and our two escapes in the morning, and the extraordinary absence of the enemy ever since, seem so to have raised all spirits that they welled over in song, and on the low mountain of suit-cases draped with tarpaulin a merry concert began, and my wife was struck by the contrast between a sentimental air sung by one of our 8th Hussars, and his looking for a man's blood, and probably getting it, before the song was concluded; for, while he was singing, the captain quietly remarked "Alert" and the now familiar red flag flew from the cruiser and the guns of our big protectors began to brighten the gloaming. This time everything came very close to us, and I heard a new order shouted to the crew: "C deck, C deck," was shouted several times. And curiously enough, from the mere fact that it was different from any

order that I had heard given before, and perhaps because it was given in a different tone, I knew that it meant Abandon ship. I afterwards asked what it had meant, and was told that it was only somebody's name, who was being called for. But, if that was so, Mr. Ceedek was for a while required very urgently, and then not wanted at all. Webb was sitting on the rail of the ship, sitting light, as hunting men sometimes do when expecting a fall, which experience teaches them is a good thing to do, as his experience had probably taught him in Piraeus Bay; and with exactly that tone of apology in his voice, in which one says "The dog has made a mess, but not on the carpet," remarked, "They have fired a torpedo, but it hasn't hit anything." That torpedo, the captain said, missed us by half a metre. This seemed to make the *Carlisle* very angry, and I remember a Frenchman beside me monotonously repeating to his wife, "Don't be afraid: they are our own shells. Don't be afraid: they are our own shells." This was perfectly true, and I hope it comforted her, but these coveys of big shells (I hope I use the right word) were coming nearer and nearer, which obviously meant that the enemy, whom we had not yet spotted, was getting closer too. Then our machine-guns joined in, and he was over us. Yet another cluster of shells burst close to us, from the *Carlisle,* and with a dreadful outburst of momentary ingratitude one of our 8th Hussars remarked, "He's a public danger, he is."

I never knew how many machines came for us that evening, any more than one usually knows how many there are when one is attacked by another deadly thing, the anopheles mosquito. Indeed, when I think of the number of ships that were firing at these insignificant things, the whole action seems comparable with a band of big-game hunters all firing off their rifles as fast as they can, to protect themselves against half a dozen malarial mosquitoes, which after all do kill more men than lions kill. The one that came over us had us at his mercy: they said he was only 150 feet up. It was probably that that made the *Carlisle* so angry. But, as Macaulay said, "to every man upon this earth death cometh soon or late," and it presumably came to him at this moment. For he dropped no bomb, and never even used his machine-gun. One of our machine-guns jammed after the first shot, but the Hussar who handled the other explained that the German was over his foresight like a bat, and that he did not think it was possible to have missed. But I have no qualification to attempt to adjudge the claims of various sportsmen. The sea was already dark, and light fades rapidly from the sky

after sunset in that part of the Mediterranean; let Shakespear's words suffice: Of his bones are coral made. —

CHAPTER XXIX

WE REACH LAND

"There was a ship," quoth he.

COLERIDGE.

AND now my memory goes back to the many friends we made on that journey to Radichevitch, to whom the firing of guns used to bring back his youth, so that the hotter things became the more he talked of war, once saying to me, "This is like Verdun." That was of course an exaggeration, that was very polite to us, comparing our little show with the great battle in which he had fought. But, most clearly of all he said, I remember one word which he said to me at the beginning of our journey, when things looked very dark, a word that cheered us and seemed to brighten the future. That word was guerrilla. He said that on his mountains and in those of Jugo-Slavia there would be a guerrilla war that the Germans could never stop. In this one word, Guerrilla, there seemed hope for the Balkans, and indeed for the world. And what he said was a true prophecy. Once when the bombers came very close he showed me the scar of an old wound over his eye. Mme. Radichevitch was an English lady from Gloucestershire, from a country I knew. Naturally there were not lifeboats for more than a fraction of the passengers, and when Eastwood, the senior of the British officers, who helped the captain, went round explaining to the men that there would not be room for them, a few women made tiresome suggestions that their husbands should be allowed in the lifeboat. It must have been a relief to him after such suggestions to hear Mme. Radichevitch, for whom room would have been found in a lifeboat, explaining that she would swim with her husband. The third British officer, Wenn, only barely survived to come with us, for he had been in the water eleven hours and was only saved with difficulty by the other two. As he remarked to me, he didn't think he could have stood it much longer. I remember Eastwood showing me the report he had written of the sinking of his ship and thinking, as a great many people do, that it could be improved by anyone learned in the literary art, but it was a simple and clear statement that could not possibly have been improved.

I think it was he, but it may have been Webb, who said to me at the beginning of the voyage, "If you feel the ship come up out of the sea and then go back again, don't bother about that; that's only a depth-charge. But if it feels like a motor going down hill, and hitting a wall, that is more serious; that would be a torpedo."

And then there was Alexander Sedgwick, a war-correspondent, a relative of two American friends of ours, and his wife, whose generosity my wife remembers yet, for she lent her a towel, a valued rarity on the *Warzawa,* not that there was much water to use with it. Sedgwick told me one day after one of the attacks, that he was opening a tin of sardines just as it started, and he thought what a trivial act it would be if it were to be his last. He told me the last recorded deeds of Matthew Arnold and Gladstone, one of them catching a bus, the other getting through a wire fence, and they seemed to him unsatisfactory as final acts. "I don't compare myself with those great men," he said. But he had not been satisfied with the idea of an exit, opening a tin of sardines. We met often in Egypt afterwards, and I read in 1943 that he had been wounded in North Africa.

And then there was Magnus Irvine, who ran the British Council in Salonika. I think we had more talks with him than with anyone else, for he always had some new idea, and had a way of making it sparkle. People who have nothing whatever to do can only talk and eat, and as there was not a great deal of food, and time seemed abundant, and as there was not much inducement to indulge in more sleep than was necessary, talk was an important part of our lives on board the *Warzawa.* And if I had not quite decided with Magnus Irvine how the world should be run, I went into the matter further with Austen Harrison, who had been one of the first to help us on board burdened with bits of luggage on a steep gangway. As he is an architect, the world must be by now in quite a good state for him. And then there was Major Archie Lyell, who had come from Serbia, with probably a black mark against his name in the books of the Gestapo. We saw a lot of him too. And we saw a good deal of the family of Mr and Mme. Coutroubis. Later in Egypt, when I had so far forgotten all I knew of the East as to sit in a silk shirt watching the sunset, and got a cold that in that septic land could not be shaken off, she most kindly treated me with the remedy of cupping, which is more practised in Greece than in England, and which did me a lot of good. And there was a young Pole on board, besides the charming Polish officers of the ship; he was going to join the Polish army in Egypt, and told

us many things about Poland, and about the Germans' ways there, ways that are unhappily too well known for there to be any need for me to tell them here.

For the next day I cannot do better than quote from my wife's diary, indeed I will quote the whole of what she recorded of that day: "Tues.: 22. We all say we would not have missed this voyage for anything, everyone is at their best and kindest, and the lovely weather and sea are such a staggering contrast to other things. There is one old peasant with a long gray plait down her back who is escorting someone's child to Haifa, she sits perfectly still all day with a face of such sadness, weariness and resignation that even if one knew her language it would be idle to speak.

Half our convoy left for Alexandria with most of the escort tonight."

My wife's description of the peasant woman, whom I well remember, helped me very much in a long poem that I was writing about this journey, and which indeed has been published, so that my pen has been going over the same ground again, which would not do if the first book had been prose. But who reads poetry now?

There is a curious omission in that account of Tuesday the 22nd, for there was another fight that day. They came for us again. But my wife seems to have ignored them. However, the *Carlisle* and the other big ships kept them away from us and none of us were even claimed that day by the enemy's wireless. The pile of dirt on the decks was by now very high, for nothing was allowed to be thrown overboard which might have attracted seagulls, which in their turn would have attracted the enemy; rather a forlorn little precaution, when we had already been found out so often. What really answered my question to the British officers, and which they could not answer, as to why they did not come in adequate force and blot us out, was a book that I read long afterwards, only last year, and which told of the Battle of Athens. That must have been the battle which saved us, when a great concentration of the R.A.F. over Athens met a big force of German planes, whose hobby was sinking ships, and defeated them. How much we owe to men whose names we have never known! I do not even know the name of the captain of our little cargo-boat, nor of the captain of the great *Carlisle.* The day before we got in, my wife went to the Polish captain to thank him for having brought us through, but he was very diffident about receiving thanks which might perhaps turn out not to have been deserved, and he hastily said, "Well, we are not there yet." He owned a greyish dog

that had once been white, and several ladies joined together to express as well as they could their gratitude to the captain. As there were practically no possessions on board, a presentation was out of the question, and mere words were not enough, so they washed his dog. Somebody must have had a cake of soap, but where they got fresh water I don't know, unless they all saved up a little of their drinking water for this last expression of gratitude.

Not only most of our convoy and escort left us, as my wife's diary records, and headed for Alexandria, but the whole of it, and we had for a few minutes the feeling of someone walking on a steep place supported by handrails, when the handrails are taken away. But very soon the feeling of all of us with regard to the immediate future was clearly shown by the number of forgotten lifebelts, which we had so often put on and off, left lying about on the deck. The blessing of Poseidon, or whatever it was, remained with us, and we went on like an insect crawling over a huge still sapphire.

Next day we came to Port Said in the afternoon, and we left the *Warzawa* that had been our home for eight days. I will end this chapter with a stanza of a poem that I wrote of our whole journey from Kent to Greece, and back to the cliffs of Whare. I think people are mistaken to prefer autobiographies to poetry; for in autobiography you mainly get mere fact, whereas in poetry, as in the drama, and indeed in all the arts, there is something far more concentrated. But, as people do read autobiographies far more than they read poetry, it is not likely that many of the readers of this book will have read the book that I called *A Journey*; and so I quote one stanza of it here, because it says what I have to say about the end of this voyage.

Over that sapphire sea for two days more
We sailed, and came to Egypt; there we said
Farewell to those, unknown to us before,
With whom we had shared hopes and bits of bread
And dangers, and the same deck for a bed.
From many lands we met by the blue waves
Of the Piraeus, for a while to head
Towards the same tomb in the same sea-caves,
Then went our many roads and shall find separate graves.

CHAPTER XXX

UNDER THE JACARANDAS

Whoso hath not seen Cairo hath not seen the world.

The Arabian Nights. The Twenty-eighth Night.

IN Port Said we had to pass through the Customs, and I had several books and letters that had to be read, but a kind officer read them in very few seconds. And then a man with a motor found us and offered to take Mr. Harrison and us to Cairo. We were ordinary fares to him, but to us his car was a return to luxury, and we seemed to change as we entered it our status of refugee. Then the bargaining began, which is usual in Egypt, but as we were sharing the car with Austen Harrison, and had to consult each other, we were at a disadvantage in a contest with one master mind. We were soon agreed over the pounds and shillings, but the argument about the pence seemed to be without any promise of ending; and it was no use conceding one small point, because innumerable new ones appeared, to take its place. Then Austen Harrison asked me my opinion about a piastre or so and I said, "I am so angry, I am going to get out": the driver took one careful look at me, decided that my wrath was indeed genuine, and off we started. At the other end of the journey the bargaining started again; but that did not matter; we were in Cairo then, in the luxury we had not known for eight days. We went along the canal all the way on our left, and here and there on our right were a few very small palm-trees: the rest was desert. Soon we saw a few British soldiers running. They ran from the right of the road to sandbagged shelters by the canal, where they stopped. A glance at their faces did not show what had alarmed them: it was nothing from the air, for they were not looking up: a ship was coming along the canal from the south, but it was a very pacific one and they were not looking at it, but were standing behind their sandbags, sheltered up to the waist, with head and eyes straight to the front. Presently we saw another group of soldiers in similar panic, who did the same thing. The third time it happened I realized that what had so alarmed them must have been our car, which was

presumably large enough to have held a general, and the men who had been watching from the right side of the road in such shade as that part of Egypt provided, but unprotected by the sandbags, fled to the sandbags that ought to have been protecting them, as soon as a car was observed which might have concealed a general.

After parting from Austen Harrison my wife and I went first to the British Institute, where we were kindly given two memorable cups of tea late in the evening, and drove on to Mena House Hotel in the calm of the edge of the desert. There we dined and went to bed. I need not tell the reader what beds are like, for most of my readers will know that now; but five years ago it was very few that knew the comfort of a bed, for no one can know that who has not come to it in boots that he has worn for a week. Now we took off those boots, and *we* had a bath. And not only did we have baths, but we rang the bell and said, "This water is cold. Kindly have it heated up." And this was soon done for us. It was only afterwards that we found out that the fires that heated all the baths in the hotel were let out every evening, and realized that the manager, with a generosity worthy of the Good Samaritan, must have allowed the whole of the bathwater in the hotel to be heated up to give a couple of hot baths to two tired travellers.

My wife records in her diary next day that we had a "blessed rest," and the following day that we walked to the Pyramids, but were still feeling rather stiff. This I do not remember, nor do I know what made us stiff, but my wife suggests that it was the sleeping accommodation. On this day my wife was kindly given a lift into Cairo by Lady Needham, with whom we had previously travelled all the way from Glasgow to Cairo, and she records in her diary that she bought a few things. Of course we continually met fellow-refugees, now even more changed than the captain's dog. Indeed the difference between a refugee (with or without a lifebelt) in the hollow of a tarpaulin over a heap of baggage rising from refuse-covered decks, and a lady fashionably dressed in Cairo, is something that should be seen to be believed. The next day was Sunday, and we went to the Cathedral, again in Lady Needham's car, and on the way a lorry passed us with six soldiers in it, who waved to us, and we recognized the hussars with whose help we had come from Greece. Later Sir Robert Greg sent a car for us and took us to see the glory of the jacaranda, now in full bloom; and much other hospitality we enjoyed in Cairo, and yet it was not quite the Cairo that we had known, but a Cairo with a curse over it. The curse was the khamseen,

which at this time of the year blows every now and then, like the irregular breath of some devil dwelling in the Sahara. Sometimes we had fairly cool days with the temperature not over a hundred, and we used to dine by little tables in the starlight beside the swimming-bath, but when the khamseen was blowing it was impossible to dine there, and we had to stay in the house. Opening the window then was like opening an oven door. We saw the Sedgwicks and the Coutroubises and Irvine and Lyell and Austen Harrison and others, and the Baileys arrived from Copais, having escaped in another ship; but, though they had £70,000 worth of cotton there, they got no longer warning than we did, and only just had time to put a match to the cotton and come away. And we had an interesting talk with Mr and Mrs. Delaney, who owned the Mena House Hotel, which off and on I had known for so long. And then one day among so many uniforms I saw a girl wearing a blue badge on her sleeve with a white springbok prancing upon it underneath Southern stars. So I greeted her, and we soon got in touch again with Miss Wardrop and Miss Niel, two of my old antagonists at chess on the *Arundel Castle,* who were living somewhere near in the desert, and later we had lunch with Mrs. Newell, who now had a flat in Cairo. We continually met people from Greece, and it was interesting to compare notes with some who had got away in other ships, some of which had been sunk, and we heard the terrible story of the *Hellas,* a hospital ship that had been sunk in the Piraeus either before or after we left it. And we tracked down our six hussars in their camp, quite close, in the desert. One curious thing I have noticed about the desert wherever I have met it, whether in Algeria in time of peace or in Egypt in time of war, is the way that roads run out into it, which the desert, with a vast tolerance, does nothing to harm, and yet they appear there as faintly as a lighted match held up to the sun, as though the Sahara had a huge quiet scorn for all the ways of man. We asked the six men to tea in the garden of the hotel; and one day they came, and all went to the swimming-bath afterwards. It was then, as I saw all six going into the water from the high plank like seals in the Zoo, that I knew for what qualification they had been chosen to come with us on our Mediterranean cruise.

One day as I was sitting in the shade outside the hotel, three soldiers came up, and one of them asked me with a very innocent expression if I could tell him the price of a glass of beer. I asked him where they came from; and they said Tobruk. As Tobruk was at that time besieged, and I had

never before met soldiers on leave from a siege and did not think history recorded any, I said that in that case I thought beer cost nothing. So we had some glasses of iced beer and a certain amount of talk, and then some more glasses of beer. How Kipling would have rejoiced in such an opportunity, and what tales of Tobruk he would have passed on to us!

We began to hear rumours of our luggage, which had been taken to the legation, and which we believed had had that privileged journey with the legation staff once mentioned to me in London; but that ship had gone down. We were delighted about this time by the quaint journey of Hess and, curiously enough, also about this time I came across my friend Peter Fleming, who had written an account of that journey, being ahead of the fact, as art so often is, only he had made the mistake saying the Fuehrer instead of the Deputy Fuehrer, though correct in most other details.

We had a comfortable room, with a lovely eucalyptus tree outside, all in blossom, and beyond that the desert and the Great Pyramid. Round the electric lights the hornets arranged themselves decoratively inside the shades with all their heads turned inward. There was a barely discernible difference between the voice of the sirens in Greece and those of our own sirens; but in Egypt they had a different cry altogether, and the one outside our window, on the extremely rare occasions on which it was heard, sounded like a new species. And it cried in vain, for no bombs dropped within hearing.

One day we were delighted to see Colonel Blunt coming up the steps of the hotel. We had last seen him strolling by the seaside on the day we left the Piraeus, and had often wondered how he had fared.

Egypt was then a Golconda of golden stories: nobody got there at that time without some story of adventure, which many did not trouble to tell, because such tales were too common. And there were the ancient wonders of Egypt lying all round us, so that we could glance back over six thousand years of history, or watch the frantic course of the history of today. And yet those tales we heard, and what we ourselves saw, were not history; they were only the material of history, what bricks are to the architect: the architect has yet to come, and to see that all these things are gathered into their places, to make a strange and wonderful edifice, at which those of other ages will look, as travellers look at the pyramids, perhaps cursorily, with their interest mainly given to other things; but they will look.

Meanwhile the khamseen blew, and one's own interest in anything was not so alert as it should have been to estimate the splendour either of present or past.

CHAPTER XXXI

AMONG THE BEETLES

ONE story comes back now to my memory, which one of the three soldiers told me over their iced beer. I don't know if it is true, but it had a very genuine ring about it. The Gurkhas, he said, when they got within twenty yards of the Germans, used to throw away their rifles. Then, he said, the Germans thought they had got them. But there still remained the kukris, and it was evidently with those that the Gurkhas preferred to do their work, which according to my informant they did very effectively.

One night, to return to our own small doings, we dined with Prince George Lutfallah and his brother and sister at the Gezira Palace; and I remember his kindness in saying that the whole party would dine in day clothes, for he must have found out that our luggage consisted of what, besides my two hats, we had been able to carry in our hands, and so the whole party dressed down to us, which looked inappropriate in those fine rooms, and yet was a great hospitality. And later I was introduced to Dr. Reisner and had tea in his house, which was another delightful experience. His house was built of mud, and a certain amount of reed to make it stick together, and stood on the sand looking straight across it at its immediate neighbour, the third pyramid. There was a great charm about Dr. Reisner which made all his friends devoted to him, and wherever there is a central attraction like that, no parties are ever dull. There he and his secretary, Miss Perkins, who presided over the tea-table, entertained all kinds of people. And some charm that was over that mud house so blended them that I never saw anybody who felt out of it there, or who did not greatly enjoy those tea-parties. If I say Dr. Reisner was probably the greatest authority on Egyptology then living in Egypt and that several of his guests were private soldiers, and that he was paralysed and unable to speak, I shall hardly be believed. But his learning was no barrier to our less instructed minds, and somehow his charm shone through his affliction and the impending shadow of death; and the deep interest he took in the section of life he had chosen, six thousand years of it, that is to say, in the valley of the Nile, and the great interest that all his friends took in him, still haunted that house that stood before the doorway of the last home of Menkara. To the left like a mountain

rose the second pyramid, and one day while I was there some young mountaineer in khaki went to the top of it, a very considerable feat.

We went again, with Austen Harrison and others, to the Bayt el Kredlia, the lovely house of Major Gayer Anderson, and sat there for a while, waiting for the moon to rise; and when it rose we went to the Mosque of Ibn Toulun and walked round it in the light that is always magical, the glow of the full moon. Through narrow streets enchanted by that light we returned to the Bayt el Kredlia and had supper at a low table of alabaster with old Turkish silver upon it. In Indian palaces I had never seen the pure East, for there amongst Oriental treasures one might meet with yule-logs of iron and an electric fire; but at the Bayt el Kredlia Sheharazade would have found nothing strange, though of course her talk there might have been a little flat, without the stimulant of impending death in the morning.

On June 16th we left this land of ancient wonders, which was so full now of tales of modern adventure. I remember the curving shape of white waves seen from the train, and their thin delicate crests about to fall in thunder; but they never did fall, for they were all of sand, but spun by the wind as delicately as it spins water. My wife recalls that we had breakfast at a quarter past six and got on board our transport at a quarter to four and that, though we had some green figs with us, we were rather hungry and thirsty when we asked for lunch, but a Chinese steward said there could be no lunch, because we were late for it. Curious that we should have noticed things like this on board the big transport, while nobody would have dreamed of complaining in our dear *Warzawa.* It had been planned that I should go to Turkey, and my wife had had the excellent idea that winter in South Africa would be better to wait in than midsummer in Egypt, and had had the energy to make the suggestion, and energy is not very abundant in Egypt in June. And so we were going southwards in the transport, with the idea of getting to Turkey in November. But *Dis aliter visum,* as the Romans used to say, though it seemed at this time that much of the world was more controlled by the Devil, especially before his influence was so much weakened by Stalingrad. Any way I never got back to Turkey.

There were two kinds of beetle in our beds, and my wife at first seemed to take some dislike to them, but I asked her what harm the beetles did, whereas the Chinese stewards...! The head-stewards were English and were charming, but there were very few of them; we heard that nobody is more pleasant than a Chinese steward, but that the old regular stewards had not

put to sea in these difficult times, and we had an idle theory that the stewards now on board were Shanghai-men who had been themselves Shanghaied to take the places of the excellent stewards that the Company always had in times of peace. At Suez we did what was done by every ship in which I had sailed during this war, that is to say we waited two days in harbour. This was a sporting thing to do, because it gave the enemy's bombers a chance of finding us: other reasons I cannot give, because one is not told them in time of war. I asked one of the ship's officers if we had not some Italian prisoners on board, but he became embarrassed and silent. As a matter of fact we had twelve hundred of them. They were all grand-opera singers and they entertained us very well for an evening or two, until the heat made singing impossible.

Curious to think that if one attempted on land to stay in a Turkish bath for a week one would be forcibly restrained, and yet our transport in the Red Sea in June was a perfect Turkish bath and we were in the Red Sea for twelve days. Whenever the captain saw any coal he stopped and collected it, and Bishareens carried it on board in baskets. The immediate effect of drinking a cup of tea, so far as one's shirt was concerned, was as though one had poured it externally over one's shirt. Anybody contemplating a holiday of a fortnight at mid-summer in the Red Sea should have at least a hundred shirts. The Italian prisoners wore no shirts, and, as far as I could see, some of them escaped prickly heat. All the rest of us had it. One day as the prisoners came by for their hour on our deck, and I had got some limes from a steward and was drinking a lime-juice and water, the heat was so frightful that I was moved to offer half of my drink to an Italian. But he did not like the rather dirty look that lime-juice gives to water, or else he thought I was trying to poison him: anyway, he looked at it and refused it. We shared a table with three people from Athens, Mr and Mrs. Denn; and Mr. Noel Paton, who ran the British Institute in Athens and who told me how he had put all the books of the library of the Institute where the Germans will not find them. We had good food, but roast beef and sausages in the Red Sea made me wonder if the Company had been allowed to know that their ship had slipped away from cold Northern waters. One could not sleep on deck, as it was too crowded with extra life-boats, with which it was evidently intended to save all on board in case of trouble, in preparation for which we had boat-drills now and then. We missed the freedom of the W*arzawa,*

where the life-boats were too few for it to be worth bothering about boat-drills.

We had gone on board on June 16th; on June 20th we arrived at Port Sudan, and there we stopped till June 22nd. I have described the haze of sand that hung over the desert in a book called *A Journey,* but that book will not get in the way of the publishers of this book, for it is only poetry, and things I say of Port Sudan here will not interfere with *A Journey,* for they are only facts. The sun, then, shone silver through a haze of sand, and you could look at it as you can look at the full moon. The main town of Port Sudan is laid out with good wide streets, and the suburbs are built of thorn and petrol tins. A salty desert lies round it, and beyond the desert lies a ring of mountains. There coal was picked up in sugar-tongs and put into baskets, which Bishareens carried on board. I did not actually see the sugar-tongs, and I only deduce them from the time that it took to coal. Our grand-opera company lay on its deck in dead silence.

In the afternoon of June 22nd we steamed away through the silvery air, over the green sea, and in two days more we came to Aden; there there had evidently been a shower within the last few weeks, for there was a stain of green on the rocks, like verdigris on a neglected salt-cellar. The purple crags of the fortress rose grimly up from pure-golden sand. There we stayed two more days. I remember once in the Sahara coming to an old camping-ground, for the Arabs never camp on fresh ground, and seeing the ticks run out to meet the camels: somewhat in that spirit are travellers welcomed by taxi-drivers and others at Aden.

On June 27th we went on at evening, and steamed through the Gulf of Aden for two days, which was still hot. And then one day we met the monsoon, blowing from India, and there was white on the crests of the waves, and air to breathe. It was as though a curse were lifted, and I wrote in one of my letters that "the Wolves of Tuscany yapped for joy."

But one Italian officer had been driven mad by the heat, and we seemed to have some of the plagues of Egypt on board, and prickly heat with many of us turned to boils, of which the doctor told me we had sixty-eight bad cases, of which I was one. One night, deciding that it would be impossible to sleep, I got up and walked about the ship, and I came to a room next to the prisoners' hospital where two men with revolvers were drinking coffee, on watch in case the prisoners should try to come aft. I joined them for a while, and then found the Chinese hospital-orderly, a young man who took

a great deal of trouble to give me some relief; and of course the doctor did what he could, but he was a pretty busy man. There is a strange hush over the night-life of a ship, which grows still more intense in time of war, a thing too subtle for clear description, yet slightly enriching one's memories. This midsummer in the Red Sea was not quite like other midsummers there, for the black-out gave to the cabins at night a new and oven-like feature. After a while I took to my bed, and stayed there with the beetles. We were steaming into winter, and we came to Durban in a week from the time when we met the monsoon. The ship did not berth for four more days, but the doctor got a few of the sickest of us let off, and I went ashore with the unfortunate Italian officer, who was quite still and silent and all strapped up.

CHAPTER XXXII

AFRICA AT PEACE

I WENT to a nursing-home on the Berea Hills, whose gardens overlook Durban, and with good nursing, a good doctor, good air and good fruit, I began to recover almost at once. Indeed two things the nurses wondered at were that I could have got so bad and that I recovered so quickly; but with regard to the first, I pointed out to them that they evidently did not know the other end of Africa, and, as for the second, cures in Natal are easy. The lovely sunny air, the bright gardens and the far-off African hills set me writing poems again, and this was the first of them, and describes an actual experience:

Once on my travels I heard a bird at dawn in a garden
Calling aloud clear notes of a song that I did not know.
And a dream, to me sleeping yet, cried out of a new country,
And I woke and saw Natal, all bright in the morning, glow.

It was printed in some South African papers, and what difficulty I had trying to restrain printers from taking out the last comma and thereby ending the poem with what looks like two nouns jostling together in the German way which for the last quarter of a century has been so spoiling our language! Not that there is much harm in two hyphened nouns, but you see them running to six or seven nowadays.

But to mention the sunshine and flowers and fruit of Natal without saying anything of its hospitality is to tell a story with something lacking, as though one should paint a landscape leaving out one of the three colours. My wife, who was still in the ship, had asked me to telephone for a room for her in a hotel, and this I asked my nurse to do, and no hotel in the town had a vacant room. And a Durban lady, Mrs van Amstell, happened to hear her telephoning and offered to put up my wife in her house, who accepted her great kindness and stayed there for a fortnight. When I left the nursing-home cured, I stayed there for three days. The garden in front of the house was small, but so full of fine flowers that sitting there and seeing great butterflies floating over them in the sunlight gave me as much to look at as

one wanted. Mr and Mrs van Amstell had a small son who, as with all white children in Natal, was waited on by an adoring Zulu. Mr van Amstell was employed by the K.P.M. shipping line, and very soon after we left was sent to the Celebes, where he was killed by the Japanese. I shall never forget the great hospitality of Mr and Mrs van Amstell.

From Durban Mrs van Amstell drove us out about twenty miles to the Rob Roy Hotel on Botha's Hill in the Valley of A Thousand Hills. And there we stayed. I shall not be able to describe those hills, not only because there were too many of them, but because, according to the time of day and the state of the atmosphere, there were many more than a thousand or many less, and of course they continually changed their colours. Near us were the wrinkled hills of a Chinese screen, yellow with sere grass; and far away, usually blue, were rows of those flat-topped hills that are so familiar in Africa, and at evening they turned scarlet or purple or gold. Along the edge of the lawns of the hotel ran practically a frontier, for a hill descended steeply and a road clung to the side of it, and nearly all the tracks on that road were of bare feet. It was the Zulus' country as far as the eye could see, and on and beyond that road were only Zulus. There they lived in their round huts with sometimes a few things that they had got from the white man, like an occasional sheet of corrugated iron, but not more of those things than what one of our travellers might bring home from an African journey. Their agriculture was simple, a few cattle round the kraals, and sometimes a little lonely patch on a side of the great hills, which one of them had ploughed. Their hay they dealt with simply by putting a match to it, to make room for the new grass, and a blackened hillside that had shone all night with fire would be lit in a day or two with the scarlet glory of the flower they call the fire-lily. Storks would circle over these burned spaces looking for dead snakes, for storks have crossed the equator and found land that satisfies them on the other side. I believe that this is only a recent journey of theirs, and must have something to do with the ways of man, for man is the only creature that changes his ways: perhaps they like him as a neighbour and followed his European civilization to the other side of Africa, or perhaps aeroplanes showed them that there was something beyond the equator which they had not suspected before.

While we were staying with the van Amstells in Durban I had been asked to read some of my poems at the Durban Broadcasting station, poems that I had written during the first part of our year and a half of wandering and

which were published in 1943 under the name of *Wandering Songs*. I read some of them and they were recorded; and I met there Captain Treacey, who presided over the department of Broadcasting House in which I was making that record. At the time at which I write these lines the world may not yet have heard of him, but he has a very interesting treasure to show the world, for he has collected the songs of a great many tribes. Such things are a sort of spiritual gold, lying neglected by us in Africa, like ponderable nuggets, but fortunately able to be brought to Europe without depriving Africa of them. There some of them may one day be minted to other shapes by some musician, but they are valuable even as they are; indeed these simple songs, when not spoiled and depraved by cities, are the very voice of Africa, or one of the voices, for the roar of the lion is another, and then there are the voices of some unforgettable birds. On that day we had tea with Mr. McKeurtan in a lovely house with a garden behind it, in which African flowers grew profusely in their own native air. One day on the lawn of the Rob Roy Hotel, looking over the Thousand Hills, we saw Mr and Mrs. Hole at tea, who had entertained us kindly when he was British Consul in Salonika, and whom we had last seen in Athens. Sea-power can do this sort of thing, and a lot more besides. We were very glad to see them again.

Once we changed our climate for a day, when a fellow-visitor at the hotel, Mr. Ross, most kindly lent us his car, and we went down from the hills along the Umgeni River till we came to a tropical forest with trees on which grew huge flowers. Miss Marda Vanne and Miss Gwen Ffrangcon Davis were at that time playing in Durban, and we were able to get them to come and have tea with us. Though Miss Marda Vanne had acted before 1921, and though I had had short plays running in London before that, I think that she and I made our principal début on the same date, which was the night of the first performance of *IF,* and it was very pleasant to meet her again, and to be introduced to Miss Ffrangcon Davis. And then I had the good fortune to meet Mr. W. P. Bawden, who has a house on one of the flowery hills of Durban and a farm near Bergville, under the Drakensberg. When I look back in memory to Africa I have a wider vision of it than I should have had but for his kindness. He had heard that I was fond of shooting, and he took us in his car to Bergville so that I might shoot on his farm. On the way we came to the Howick Falls, which are among the world's great waterfalls. There the Umgeni River falls over smooth rock for 365 feet. It is not easy to speak of a waterfall, for it is one of the great forces

of the world, and one gazes at it in silence. There are, as all races have recognized, great and solemn powers sharing the world with Man, but seeming to take little heed of him: mountains, waterfalls, storms and the sea are some of these, but there is an awe about them beyond our understanding. Sometimes a poet, feeling some distant kinship with them, seems partly to understand them, and looking at that stupendous fall I thought of Tennyson, who seems to have described such things better than anyone else, where he says:

> some like a downward smoke,
> Slow-dropping veils of thinnest lawn did go,
> And some thro' wavering lights and shadows broke
> Rolling a slumbrous sheet of foam below.
> They saw the gleaming river seaward flow
> From the inner land.

> And also where he says:
> the slender stream
> Along the cliff to fall and pause and fall did seem.

I cannot improve on Tennyson in telling of that fall: I can only say that it came down all white from the silver edge of the water above, and fell over a smooth ochre-coloured cliff into a pool of olive-green, and that a rainbow hung over it more than half way down, which moved lower still until noon and then moved upwards. Undisturbed by man it fell, and only birds visited it wherever some crack in the smooth cliff gave them room to alight. Then it moved on down the valley under crags as old as itself, and as unconcerned with Man.

From these great things that had been there before any trace of our story, we went to fields where Man's history had been abundantly written, fields as bare of any sign of a story as blank sheets of paper, places that you would have said were obscure, and far from the track of nations, were it not for their names, which are known to so many, though so few have seen their features. Into that historic land we entered about Estcourt, and beyond the little town on an empty road with bare veldt on each side of it we passed the site of Sir Redvers Buller's camp. What strange cities camps are! They spring up in places almost unknown to life and death: for a while those

places hum with the greatest activity of which a people is capable, and then the city of canvas disappears, leaving even less trace than those that were built of marble. And yet it is not by the chance traveller's eye that these white cities should be sought: they were too intense in their time ever to fade from memory, and it is in memory that they abide in the fortunes of nations, which trace their origins from those canvas doors.

We saw the distant frown of Spion Kop on our right and came to Bergville, where we stopped the night in a comfortable little hotel. Next day we went to Mr. Bawden's farm, Tregenna, where the manager and six neighbouring guns and I set out to look for guinea-fowl. Zulus beat for us and the guinea-fowl flew as strong and high as pheasants. We had lunch on the lawn in front of the farm-house by flower-beds full of tall flowers, and by the time that the Drakensberg turned gold in the evening we had shot ninety guinea-fowl. A brother of an old Inniskilling, Captain Scott, lived near and we went to drink tea with him and Mrs. Scott one morning. There are not many times of the day when one does not drink tea in South Africa. I remember their telling me how one morning they saw a night-viper lying outside their front door in an angle of two of the steps. Nobody can help noticing that wherever bright sunshine brings up abundant life, death is never far away. The Scotts' daughter took us a drive to show us the Drakensberg, and we saw those gray mountains that had looked on so many battles, now watching over maize. But their greatest glory, which has been named the Cathedral, hid all its spires that day. Then Mr. Bawden drove us to Ladysmith. It was strange to approach that famous town through such silence and emptiness, as though Clio, who has so much to say, had strayed over the veld unseen, and there fallen asleep.

Ladysmith is perhaps one of the last towns whose houses can boast of having endured a siege. A siege in those days added interest and fame to a town, and when it was over the batteries were withdrawn and gardens returned to the hills on which they had stood, and a few particularly favoured houses would have a shell-hole to show. But there are no more houses to tell such stories, for as Man's ally the machine grows stronger and stronger he can only stand aside and watch such destruction as his forbears rarely imagined. Man had neither the power nor the desire to do what these machines do. But the world is too familiar with destruction to need my comment upon it: meanwhile Ladysmith smiles in the sunlight and remembers its siege as its most glorious incident.

We stayed in Ladysmith for the night and next day went on to Colenso, where Mr. Bawden had to attend a meeting of something of the nature of one of our County Councils. That journey took us right through the strip of land that once lay still and mysterious between two armies. Now it was empty and still again, but with all its mystery gone. And so we came to Colenso, the village that was named after an English bishop, whose name flared suddenly before the world's eyes, and is remembered yet by the world, though not for anything that the bishop taught. There are a few memorials on the battlefield at the edge of the town, and a small graveyard among trees and bushes that looked like a rather neglected orchard; but no one without the eye of a geologist would see that there had been a battle there: anyone accustomed to looking at the ground for relics of past ages might see there, grey and completely flattened, a brass case that had fired a shell, but otherwise one is impressed by the very opposite of what Mrs. Alexander wrote:

For beast and bird have seen and heard
That which man knoweth not.

For birds and lizards there seem completely at peace, and it is only man whose memory seems worried with something about the Tugela which means nothing at all to them.

CHAPTER XXXIII

THE THOUSAND HILLS

WE went now to another hotel, further inland and on higher ground. This was the hotel at Hilton Road, and there Mr. Bawden left us. We had heard about this time, that we should not be able to go to Turkey, and so we asked for a passage home in whatever ship might be found for us. This takes some while in times like these, and we were glad of the delay which enabled us to see more of South Africa, and are glad now when we look back on it. Hilton Road is an excellent hotel, and though the view does not stare you in the face as at the Rob Roy hotel, where one of the finest views in the world is right in front of the windows; still, it is there if you go to look for it. Looking to one's left, with one's back to the hall-door, stands the Drakensberg, with its comrade peaks in all their magnificence; straight in front is a wood and a sandy road running past it and rising slightly, and over the rise of the road is another line of mountains, pale blue in the distance, away to the north. To the east the view is hidden by trees and gardens, but gardens in Natal are a blaze of azaleas, and the weeping willow grows in Natal with a graceful splendour that surprises us who think we are quite familiar with them. But if one walked a little way south at night, one got a view past these gardens over Maritzburg and had the sight, so rare now in Europe, of the lights of a city. There Maritzburg shone with all its streets in what but a few days ago, as Africa counts time, was bare veld, in which animals were still unsubdued, and where Zulus dreamed of no conquest from unknown lands. Sometimes mountain mists came all round us, for we were four thousand feet up, and we could see very little at all. Then the mists would clear, and there would be the mountains again, never quite the same, for mountains never are. Almost ever since we left Egypt on our way to Greece we had been in sight of mountains, and even in Egypt we had lived beside some fine artificial ones, and I think that to look at mountains for a year is an education. What good mountains do us I cannot say, but that you can never say of an education. Of training you can estimate the use exactly, but education goes beyond our sight. I feel that to be amongst mountains is to be taken for a while amongst a very august company, that have an ancient wisdom among them which we cannot understand, but we

are better for having looked upon the mere faces of those that possess it. A poet must sometimes speak of eternal things: if he has been among mountains at least he has seen them.

Sometimes we went to see the Howick falls again, and an even grander sight, the Karkloof falls. The Karkloof falls we saw from a steep grass slope near the top of them, going down to a pool beside a cave from which butterflies seemed to flit out to sail over the water, but they were in reality large birds. No mere measurements can give any idea of these falls, for there is an awe about that roaring water that foamed there for so long before any sound of man ever mingled with the old voices. I expressed something of what I feel of these things in a poem that I wrote at Hilton Road and which I called "Great Company." It went like this:

Five great things have I known,
And thankful am therefor,
The Sphinx, the Parthenon,
The Pyramids and war,
And mountains, grave and gray,
Close gathered peak by peak,
As though together they
Had met to hear Fate speak.

And I now, more alive,
Less dimly understand,
Since in one year these five
All took me by the hand.

And sometimes we went down to Maritzburg, by the road after which that district is named and which makes over a hundred great curves in and out of the hills in the few miles of that journey. It is a tarmac road, looking strange in Africa, where all the roads that cross it are covered with tracks of bare feet. What I remember clearest about Maritzburg is what is least urban about it, which may be a strange way by which to remember a city, but any natural or eternal thing that I ever meet in a town always cheers me, making me suddenly feel that after all I am not an exile from earth, as the artificialities of a town force one almost to suppose. I remember some gardens in Maritzburg with a pond at the end of them under a little grove of

trees, and the egrets coming in to the trees at evening. They come as thick as starlings come to the National Gallery and other buildings in London, and whiten all the trees with their friendly visit.

Sometimes I was asked to speak or lecture in Maritzburg, and I gladly did so, though there is a difficulty about speaking in these days; yet it is easily overcome, and indeed should be. The difficulty is that one cannot look at the splendour and ruin about us without feeling that we must preserve something of the splendour, and try to avert more ruin from the next generation. Feeling thus, one cannot help being convinced that the oak-tree falls not only because the north wind blew, but because there was something rotten in the oak. Even more important than disarming the Nazis, I feel it to be to make sure that we ourselves are sound. When the Nazis are disarmed there will be plenty to take their place, nor will they remain disarmed very long. If we are sound, it does not matter who attacks us, nor will it much matter who attacks us if we are rotten, for anybody would be able to push us over then. Therefore, while those whose business it is make plans for checking any further rages of Hitler, I feel that it is the clear duty of the rest of us to point out any specks of decay in our own system, in order that they may be remedied by ourselves, and not by that grim visitor that comes in turn to all peoples who lose their strength, one night under his own red star. I think that nothing wrong in our system is too small to be pointed out, as no speck of decay is too small to be dangerous. I will not give tedious examples, but only one; and, if it be too small, my reader can find many larger ones: I have heard it said that there are men whose trade it is to carve sham seeds out of wood to put in sham raspberry jam; and, whenever I have heard this story told, someone has laughed. Let us lift the level of our civilization only so far that no one will think that funny any more. That is all.

But it is difficult to speak of such things as these, for nothing is harming our civilization that does not bring to somebody what he thinks to be good, and that man will not only be very angry at any interference with his raspberry pips, but he will have some organization to protect them, which he will share with men who are doing similar work. And yet how much preferable it is that we should remove our own evils, whatever they be, and of our own volition, instead of waiting for Mars to overturn them, as sooner or later he does, and all our cities with them.

On another day I went to Durban as the guest of the Rotary Club, under the chairmanship of Mr. P. C. Bishop. Realizing that no one would be there without being something of a traveller, or his father before him, I spoke to them on the subject of "A Year's Wanderings," for it was by then the 26th of August, 1941, and we had left Ireland on August 13th, 1940. I illustrated my talk a good deal with poems that those wanderings had inspired. They gave me a most kind welcome, but that is the way of the people of Durban with strangers.

Webb, on his way to find a new ship, arrived in Durban, as did so much of the world in those days, and I heard of him through Sir Rex and Lady Hoare, whom I met at tea with the Head Master and his wife at Hilton College on their way from Rumania, and Webb and I tried to meet but did not succeed. There are some fine schools in that splendid air, where the cricket season lasts for twelve months: Michaelhouse was another of these colleges, and the Head Master and his wife entertained us there very hospitably. The Maritzburg Rotary Club entertained me too, and many other places; and then the wattle bloomed abundantly:

Round and round the spicy downs the yellow lotus-dust is blown.

And this gave my wife very bad asthma, which she had already had on board the *Warzawa* and in the Red Sea, though without complaining about it. Now it became too bad to stay where the dust of the wattle could aggravate it, especially at that height, so we left that pleasant hotel and the sight of the Drakensberg and returned to the Thousand Hills. It was delightful to see that mighty view again, and once more we were very kindly looked after at the Rob Roy Hotel. For some days my wife got no better, and the doctor who attended her mournfully advised her that a row in a life-boat would be very bad for her health. So we did nothing to hurry those who were arranging our passage. And now amongst the events and places of which I have been telling I have forgotten to record a thing that occurred nine days before we left the hotel at Hilton Road, a thing important in the life of a writer; for an idea came to me on October 9th, and though a writer, like all workmen, needs material, that can be easily come by, whereas an idea will come when it will. And this idea was that, having crossed much of the country of Childe Harold, I had perhaps the material of a narrative poem, such as I had never yet attempted; nor had I ever used

Spenser's metre, which Byron used for Childe Harold. So I deliberately chose that metre and set to work. I had been so little influenced by Byron that I knew there was no danger of plagiarism, and that I could use his metre without any risk of mimicking him. Mimicry of any great poet, or of the ways and externals of any great man, are the surest signs that a man has nothing to say himself. Greece and the way there had altered a lot since Byron's time, but still I had good material. As I read a bit of Childe Harold to get the metre right, I was struck by a strange line in which Byron speaks of his intention to cross the brine

And traverse Paynim shores, *and pass Earth's central line.*

By what route had he intended to get to Greece? I have never heard this explained, or even commented on. I had passed Earth's central line in the *Arundel Castle* and in a Sunderland; but how had he intended to do it?

On November 14th I started the 4th canto with the words

Back to the Valley of A Thousand Hills, and was then writing of what I actually saw before me. From now on my progress was slower, as though visible scenes were a grosser, less pliable material than memories. It was a curious change for a poem, which, although a consecutive narrative, was made first from remembered scenes and afterwards from a description of local scenery. Yet so lovely were the mountains of Africa, and so thrilling were those days, especially at sea, that the level of the poem did not drop when it ceased to tell of the brightest events that flashed in my memory. Indeed, it rose, because in the early part of it which told of the Battle of Britain I was writing in a metre with which I was quite unfamiliar, though I think that in those circumstances it was the obvious one to have chosen.

Sometimes thunderstorms, such as I had never seen before, raged over the Thousand Hills, and clouds on those occasions came tearing over the grass, and the sunlight would flash through chinks in them, so that we sometimes caught glimpses of golden patches in the valley far below us. Silver flashes of lightning of enormous length came down on to the hills from the top of the sky, and then the hail would get loose and hailstones big as large marbles came crashing down and bouncing above the lawns. After one of these thunderstorms the flying ants arrived, coming out of the white clouds all round us and streamed through all the passages of the hotel, on the floors of which they dropped their wings in a few hours and crawled like ordinary ants, for they fly only for a single day.

When any engagement took me to Durban and I had to stay for the night, Mr and Mrs. Bawden very kindly put me up in their house, whose garden looked out over the other gardens of the hills that lie landward of Durban. There was a very small pond in that lovely garden, but it was enough for an orchestra of frogs, whose melody haunted the night. Mr. Bawden had two delightful bulldogs, and I do not know many kinds of dogs that are more friendly to the human species than the bulldog is.

My wife's asthma got better, and soon we had some rumour of our passages having been booked in an anonymous ship. More than rumours of such proceedings one does not get in such times. Regretfully we left that wonderful valley and that great parliament of mountains which sat so gravely watching it. Vividly I remember still the enormous boulders of that valley, not rounded as other boulders are by streams, but rough-hewn by hail-stones and then smoothed by the rain; and the iguana shelters under them, and the chameleon runs over them, subduing his brilliant colours as he goes, to the tint of the lichen around him. And the tree-frog chirrups there from eucalyptus and wattle, and huge flowers flash there, and on one side of the narrow hill goes the great cemented road to Durban, and close on the other side goes a sandy road covered by tracks of the bare feet of Zulus.

CHAPTER XXXIV

BATTLES LONG AGO

WE were told that it would make no difference to those who were arranging our journey whether we went to Capetown from Durban by sea or whether we went by land; and so, as the way by land went past four old battlefields that I had known, I decided to go that way and see them again. One of the many friends that we had made at Hilton Road, Mrs. McKeurtan, came from Durban to say good-bye, and we drove to Maritzburg and went from there by train. Night fell as we started, and in that hilly country we saw the streets of Maritzburg shining again and again, as our train twisted out of the winding valleys. And then we went by night over the veld, and in the morning we saw it wild and old, and patches of it recently tamed by man. And so we came to Johannesburg, a city that has made many cities rich and will perhaps some day roof her own houses with semi-precious stones, though for many of them corrugated iron serves as yet. Yet Johannesburg has her treasures. Take a dream and refine it with hard work, and you have wealth that the uncut diamond cannot equal; and this is no discovery or theory of mine, but is pretty well accepted by mankind, who will pay for a picture by Rembrandt about half a ton of gold. And so we went to the Art Gallery in its tree-shaded garden, but it was shut that day; and yet, as we were travellers unlikely to see it again, the Director with true South African hospitality allowed us to come in and showed us round, and so a very grateful memory is brightened by the smiles of two figures by Rodin and by many Dutch and English pictures.

At the hotel the telephone rang, and a voice came to me over it that I had not heard for forty years, the voice of a young South African friend whom I remembered well. It seemed strange, when he came to the hotel, to see that his hair was pure white, and I looked equally strange to him, but we were soon back among old memories and we had a long talk.

One curious thing I remember about Johannesburg, which Mr. Hendriks, the Director of the Art Gallery, told me, and that is that in London, which Dumas and other foreign writers have so graphically described as a city of almost perpetual night, there is so much more light than what blazes down from the blue African sky, that Art galleries need more glass in Africa than

what the National Gallery uses in London. The reason of this is that in London the clouds diffuse the light, whereas in Africa it only comes from a single point, the sun.

After two nights in Johannesburg we continued our journey by train, and came to Kimberley about the time that mirages disappear, as though the veld put away its dreams before those of man begin. And yet there have been some large day-dreams in Africa, and the diamond-mine of Kimberley must have seemed like one of them coming true. About the time that Rider Haggard was writing his *King Solomon's Mines* Kimberley must have been beginning to give up that great store which outshines anything Rider Haggard imagined. Kimberley does not look like the richest city in the world; it looks more like a little country town, such as Warminster or Tonbridge, strangely transmuted by the glow of African skies and beautified by its fruit-trees, all the lovelier for being set in the vast bareness of the surrounding veld. Yet even the rubbish-heaps are valuable there, and many a man has bought an old cottage or a bit of land large enough on which to build a shack, and has made a few hundred pounds by sifting the old debris thrown out by miners who did not grind as carefully as they grind today. We were shown a few handfuls of diamonds by Mr. Fisher, an official of the Consolidated Diamond Company, diamonds of as many different colours as there are in a drop of water when the sun shines on it. And we were shown the enormous crater, the biggest thing of that kind that man has done, and undoubtedly one of the things that, with tunnels and pyramids, and long thin lines of rust marking old railways, will provide clear evidence to the geologists of whatever race may succeed us that we have been here in our day. As though the world had grown weary of wealth, or the Consolidated Company weary of digging up diamonds, the excavation has ceased, and at 1200 feet down dark-green water lies now undisturbed in the pit. A few pepper-trees stand round the slanting rim, a pigeon or two sails over the green water, and all is as still as the Bank of England would be, if it were deserted by all but mice.

I went to the market-place to hire a taxi to take me to the old battlefields, fought in the effort to reach Kimberley, and there I found an old taxi-driver and asked him if he knew the way to Belmont. He said he did and would guide me over the battlefield. I saw that he knew it well and asked him to what regiment he had belonged, and he told me he was a Boer. (Sirens 2nd Book)

“Then you are a damned bad shot,” I said.

“I am a very good shot,” he said to me.

“You are a bad shot,” I said, “or I wouldn’t be here. But let that pass, and we’ll go and see the old battlefields.”

So away we went.

The battlefields had changed wonderfully little; and, as the date was within one day of the battle of Modder River forty-two years ago, there was no perceptible change at all. Red earth, sere grass, a few bushes, flat kopjes and mirages lay in the heat as they had done for thousands of summers. Meer-cats held Maghersfontein now. As we went from there to Modder River by the road, the only thing besides stone memorials that was new, I recognized our old outpost-line and pointed it out to the veteran Boer.

“Yes, that’s where it was,” he said.

Modder River was just as unchanged, except that its bridge had been mended. As I went to look at the ground on which we used to sleep, a man who looked like an old resident passed us. Had he known the place as long as I had, I wondered? I greeted him. But after all I was a stranger, and he did not seem to want to get into conversation. So I took a look at the old ground by myself, and found it still strewn with bully-beef tins, that had survived so many years, though they were all perfectly flat. Bits of shell still lay about too, though they were used sparingly forty-two years ago, compared with our noisier days. We had a good lunch together in a hotel by the railway station, and I remembered a story, told one day forty-two years before, of an astonishing lizard that was seen in the river, so large that it was not quite expected that the story could be believed. I had believed it myself, though I had not seen the lizard, and I had always remembered the description of the great beast. Now I saw that the story was certainly true, for there the lizard was, stuffed, on the wall of the room in which we were having our lunch.

I took a look at the valley of the river, and then we went on to Graspan, and from there to Belmont, which for both my taxi-driver and myself had been our first experience of war. War has come a long way since then, far from many childish scruples, as the instincts of that taxi-driver and me must appear to any of those that follow the cause of Hitler. Battlefields; one had to travel far to see them once, or one read about them in histories, and fragments of shells brought from them were treasured things; one can see

them anywhere now, and pick up shells in one's garden, and a file of *The Times* tells of more of them than a whole volume of history.

CHAPTER XXXV

ORION GETS ON TO HIS FEET

IN a day or two we left the hospitality of Kimberley; we left by the night train, stepping from the great heat of summer just outside the edge of Capricorn into the astonishing luxury of an atmosphere artificially adapted to the convenience of inhabitants of the temperate zone. In the morning we saw the last of the Karoo, that strange wide desert dotted with little bushes, and came to the Hex River Mountains, whose old storms, that had slipped long since from their shoulders, lay like a green and golden cloak now fallen about their feet, shining with heaths and, in places, green patches of grass, and vines and fields of maize. And houses appeared, with all their gardens in bloom; and always behind the houses and gardens and vines, rose like the backcloth of a theatre cutting off the stage and its illusions from the rest of the world, the Hex River Mountains. About their feet, that touched the plain like the toes of great elephants, masses of flowers luxuriated, but did not seem to dare to stray far from their mighty protectors. I heard many complaints later from people in Cape Province that tradesmen taking advantage of the war had forced up the price of peaches to a penny; but we gave this price quite recklessly at wayside stations for ripe peaches.

That afternoon we arrived at Capetown. Most people have seen a vinery, so I need not describe one, and we went by train through vines to Somerset West. And there we went to an hotel, to wait until our ship should be ready. The hotel was a house built in the Dutch Colonial style, with a red-tiled walk in front of it, going through lawns into a garden, and at the end of the garden, a few miles away, but seeming to be sitting almost among the flowers, rose the Hottentots Holland Mountains. We waited there longer than we had expected to, more than a month and a half, but I never tired of looking at those mountains; nor was it possible to tire of them, for they changed so much that if I were to write some description of them as they appeared every day for all the time we were there, it might look like visits to as many different scenes. And had it been possible to tire of them, we had only to go a little way from the left of the garden and through a wood, to see quite a different range of mountains, the Helderbergs, which ran roughly at

right angles to the Hottentots Hollands and had long slopes of green before the grave gray rocks appeared. In the pinewoods at the feet of these mountains one sometimes came on little clusters of houses, too small to call villages, in which there lived dark-skinned people of many blended races. Their graveyard lay in the wood, with the trees gathered close around it, a strange wild thing, with names scratched roughly on stones, and tended by people who had planted geraniums there and had decked the graves with quantities of sea-shells. And vineyards flashed outside the edge of the wood and sunned themselves on the slopes of the Helderbergs. Lower down, in a sort of angle between the two mountain-ranges, were orchards of oranges and lemons, and the Lourens River ran past them singing over its boulders, and the sound of it drifted across the lawns and gardens of Lourensford. The sky and the garden framed those mountains in azure, the garden with long masses of agapanthus and blue hydrangeas, and sitting on the stoep they hung before one like a picture between flowers and sky. Sometimes little clouds went along their slopes, sometimes huge and stormy ones, or at evening a white flock of egrets would shine against their gray rocks. Behind us the Evening Star would appear in the west, an hour and a quarter before sunset, and sunset would touch the peaks of the mountain with an amazing glory. Two fountains shone on the lawn, and a huge magnolia tree, and Peace in exile seemed to have come there to rest. Across the Lourens River was a wood, and in it was what you would scarcely expect to find in an African wood, a magnificent library containing books of all ages, right down to the time of Meredith, Kipling and Hardy. I came on it when I went to visit Mrs. Barlow, whose house stands a little apart from the library by four enormous camphor trees, each of them bigger than any other tree that I can ever remember. I was very kindly allowed to spend some time in that library and it was a delightful experience, and there may be some way of estimating a library and passing that estimation on to others, but I do not know it, and when I contemplate such an attempt I feel like a gourmet who has been offered for his supper a herd of wild cattle. Yet I shall always remember coming at the edge of that wild wood upon this product of civilization, which seemed to contrast so perfectly with the charm of African Solitudes. To have sat in the garden of Lourensford House and looked at those mountains might have been enough for anyone that was ever stirred by superb scenery to look at for a month, but several very kind fellow-guests who were there when we first arrived took us for drives to

different parts of the neighbourhood. Colonel and Mrs. Boyes, taking a holiday from West Africa, drove us one day to the little town of Strand, whose streets open on the white sand and the sea, sand made by the pulverization of white granite by the rain and the tides of the ages, whiter than can be imagined,

White as sand of Muysenberg spun before the gale, as Kipling says of the opposite side of the bay. When a wind is blowing inshore the sand is blown against the cemented edge of the road, and upwards like a wave, and then streams across it like spray and falls in gleaming drifts. We sat some while there eating fruit and looking at that lovely bay. And on another day Mrs. Hudson and her cousin Miss Cloete drove us to the mouth of a small wild stream where it met the tide at Steenbras bridge, and on our left there were flowers all the way and on our right the sea. I once wrote a story called Poltamees, Beholder of Ocean, about a fantastic mountain with a steep slope to the sea; and I did not know, when I wrote it, whence came the vision of that mountain and believed it to be pure imagination, flowering without roots in the earth, but I think it came probably from the slopes of one of those mountains that look to the Indian Ocean, seen forty-one years before. The slope shone with flowers, many of them everlastings, not dull as we sometimes see them on mantelpieces in the North, but flashing in that bright sunlight. The flowers there had to be protected by a very stringent law, because people had been coming from Europe to dig them up for commercial purposes, but my wife had been kindly given a permit by the Administrator of Cape Province to pick some of them, which enabled her to continue a collection of flowers in water-colour which she had begun in Natal. The glory of the flowers of Natal is hard to surpass, but I think it is surpassed where the slopes of Table Mountain and of its kindred peaks, the Twelve Apostles, seem to have been laid out like an everlasting garden.

The Crown Princess of Greece, with her children, and Princess Catherine of Greece were also staying at the Lourensford hotel. Their escape from Greece was one of those adventures which, if it is ever written, will give to the people of some peaceful age, that is surely due, strange glimpses of the turmoil of our times.

One saw some twilight at Lourensford, a rare thing in Africa, and then the southern stars appeared. Sometimes, sitting in the stoep at night, we saw the sudden blaze of the most brilliant silver flashing from one of the crags of the Hottentots Hollands, a sight such as I had never seen before. I do not

know why I had never seen it before, for we saw in a few seconds that it was only the moonrise, but perhaps I had never looked east before through intensely clear air at a perfectly bare crag at the time of the full moon. I have mentioned this moonrise already in the poem that I called *A Journey,* but the sudden flood of silver was so beautiful and surprising that I tell of it again here. Before enough of the moon had come over the crag to show clearly what it was, that silver brilliance was like some phenomenon with which one was quite unfamiliar, some unknown splendour exhibited by the mountain. Jupiter also rose like that, a sudden silver flash on one of the rocks, and then, much quicker than one expected, soared clear of the mountain. Summer burned up the oleanders that flowered all along the Lourens River, the jacarandas shed their blossom till the ground below them looked like pieces of fallen sky, and the last of the magnolias turned brown; the martins left their nest in the roof of the stoep, and for that matter many of the friends we had made in Lourensford House left too, for its business as an hotel was running fast to its end, and I hear that the lovely house is now a private residence once more. And on January 23rd we went to Capetown, in obedience to such hints as one gets in days like these of the mystery of the sailing of a ship. We had had an invitation from Professor Roworth to a party at the Art Gallery, over which he presides, and had been unable to go. We knew some of his pictures of red and golden crags gleaming in African sunsets, and when we got to Capetown we called on him, and he and Mrs. Roworth and their daughter kindly gave us tea and he showed us round the gallery. In his house I met a book of mine published long ago by the Golden Cockerel Press, and he asked me to sign my name in it. Struck by having overtaken in this long strange journey the book that had so long a start, I inscribed it thus:

Wandering on a journey
Strange and long and slow
I met these words of mine again
That left me long ago.

I saw not only several of Professor Roworth's own pictures, but also some of his daughter's, and whatever magic there is in art, and what warmth there is in hospitality, brightened our day in Capetown.

We stopped one night at an hotel and went for a walk that evening where the streets run close under that tremendous mountain which watches Capetown, tremendous because this mighty thing is there so near to men, so close to their very streets, that it is as though they had an immortal among their citizens.

Next day we went on board. Those who are not writers may well have all the feelings of a poet and may express them in many ways, but it may be that no one who does not write can quite feel the anxiety with which a writer regards his manuscript and the fatal thing that its loss must appear to him. We were embarking on dangerous seas, and, stimulated by these times, I had written a great many poems, and was in the middle of the principal poem of my life; I therefore took careful precautions that I did not have my only copies in the ship with us. To send copies on ahead was no certain safeguard, for they had to cross the same seas; I therefore asked my friend Mr. Bawden to keep copies, of all I had written in Africa, on good dry land, which he very kindly undertook to do for me, and he has them still. As for what I wrote in the ship, I took carbon copies of it and posted these whenever we touched land, making sure that they would not be put on board the same ship.

We sailed at evening in the *Umtali,* commanded by Captain O'Hea, who was afterwards vice-commodore of our convoy. Then came six weeks of idleness, except that I had a long poem to write, but the world does not draw a very careful distinction between poetry and idleness, and I played some simultaneous chess with those who cared for chess amongst the very few passengers. Brigadier Sir Christopher Lewis was one of the players, and I think his son aged fifteen was even a better player. I was asked to read some poetry one day to our small company of fellow-travellers and I read, as far as it had gone, the poem called *A Journey,* which I was then writing. It was Sir Christopher who, knowing more about the solar system than I did, corrected two of my mistakes in that poem; for I had originally written that the rainbow of the Howick falls moved lower down the water after midday, and he had told me that this was impossible, and I had put it right. I may mention that there are two kinds of inaccuracy that a poet may make, and one is forgivable; the unforgivable kind is when he describes inaccurately something that he has seen, as for instance if he describes the horns of the new moon pointing to the left in South Africa or to the right in England. I had seen the rainbow a little before noon and had gone away to

drink tea, as one does in South Africa, and saw it still lower when I returned, but had not realized that it had gone down the waterfall until noon and was now on its way back. I forget what time Africa kept, but we in the British Isles often talk of 12 noon, whereas noon is while our watches say 2. The other mistake that he pointed out to me I never corrected, and that was where, mistrusting my own observation, I believed that the sun changed its direction when we passed under it where it was then vertical, whereas this occurred at the equator. But the rhymes seemed somehow to have frozen round my mistake and were not easily changed, so I left it. It was the worse mistake of the two, because I had deserted the actual observation which should be the only guide of the followers of any one of the arts. On that journey I heard a memorable remark, which is worth recording for those that do not know the remote lands of tropical Africa. I was talking to a lady from one of these about England during the Blitz; and one can tell such stories to ladies coming from Africa, though to tell them in England would be merely tedious, for they are so commonplace there; I was saying that at the time that the invasion was expected within the week the Home Guard was poorly armed, and that some only had shot-guns, but I added that shot-guns could be extremely useful.

"Yes," said the lady from East Africa rather doubtfully. "You could shoot at a man's legs."

"No, at the face," I said.

"O," she replied, "I would never shoot at a man's face."

What an awful shock, I thought, is coming to this lady! She will think when she reaches England, where no one feels any longer that scruple she treasured in Africa, that she has landed amongst savages.

My principal friends in that ship were a gentleman named Michael and a young lady called Muffet. Michael was going to live in England, on the left-hand side: he gave me no other address. The young lady was very fond of swinging and considered me fairly proficient in working a swing, which she used to get me to do whenever she could get the swing away from Michael. One day she asked me to swing her as high as the derrick from which the swing was suspended, and I swung until the swing was going well and went away to get a little rest. Presently I heard a thud behind me and saw to my horror that the child had fallen out of the swing. Luckily she was not hurt, having carelessly let go her hold just when the swing was close to the deck.

After a few ceremonial tears she forgot the incident, but I remember it still. "Why ever did you let go?" I asked her.

"You swung me too high," she said.

"But you asked me to swing you as high as the derrick," I told her.

She looked at me with her lovely blue eyes and said, "I said Don't swing me as high as the derrick."

Do angels, I wondered, sometimes tell lies in Heaven?

Soon she asked me to swing her again. So this time I swung her nowhere near the derrick. She saw with silent disgust her own words turning against her, and did not forgive me for a fortnight. At the end of the fortnight I saw a boy teasing her a good deal, probably in reprisal for something, so I told two nimble friends of mine who were a bit older than he to hunt him. This they did and brought back the boy, a captive, before Muffet and me. "Shall we kill him?" they asked. I did not answer too hastily, for fear of further offending Muffet, but after a little thought I told them to spare his life, though warning the boy that such clemency must not be expected often. Muffet thought about this silently for an hour or so, and after that she forgave me for not swinging her as high as she wanted, and we were as good friends as ever. But the serious business of the two swings was carried on by the two larger boys, who had hunted Muffet's enemy for me, and this was for each to sit in a swing and swing past the other, aiming with a stick and making quite good imitations of the noise of a machine-gun firing.

We had the usual boat-drills, and there was practice with a very big gun that we carried, and we had some false alarms, of which we were always given notice beforehand. But one day the klaxon went off outside our cabins, when we had been given no notice. On the way to our appointed places I met the purser.

"This is a real one, isn't it?" I said.

"Yes," he said. "This is a real one."

The sudden impression came to me then that perhaps when he was young he had wanted to be a pirate, and became a purser instead; but that now, as we prepared for a somewhat wilder life, the duties that would fall upon him were more to his taste than the ordinary duties of a purser. I had that impression even before he spoke, and the heartiness of his words confirmed it. Of course I may have made a mistake, and whatever duties he may have been anticipating never devolved on him, for very soon one of the stewards remarked All Clear, and we took off lifebelts and emptied out our

pockets. Let me, by the way, recommend to all travellers, even in the tropics, a thing that can be very useful, though it is usually looked on as one of the frivolities of a stay-at-home life, and that is a hot-water-bottle; and in these days, at sea, I should say that anybody collecting a few things for an expected row in a life-boat would, if they had a purse full of gold and a hot-water-bottle full of water, do well to prefer the water. Nobody who has ever been thirsty would bother about the taste of the rubber.

The weeks went by over our idle lives that were amused by more trivialities and brightened by the beauty of the sea; sometimes we saw porpoises, often flocks of flying fishes, and once or twice a turtle, and the visits of all of these were events to us. Gradually the southern stars began to sink behind us, gradually Orion recovered himself from his somersault, and a star appeared where the Bear lay under the rim of the sea.

CHAPTER XXXVI

THE CLIFFS OF WHARE

RED African hills came into sight, and we had land to look at. Africa is as red as the planet Mars. In a journey across England and Wales you can cross all the strata in the world, but it is easy to travel a thousand miles in Africa without ever getting away from the red earth. I got ashore and went to the fruit-market, and bought as big a bunch of bananas as I was able to carry and a good number of oranges. And there we joined our convoy, with its protecting destroyers and corvettes, and our small party went on northward, and our little amusements continued. One day we decided on having a book-dinner; that is to say everybody appearing at dinner dressed up as the title of some book, with our lifebelts over the backs of our chairs as usual. One rule we had which I recommend for such occasions, and that was that no writing was allowed; for if you can write anything on a label and hang it round your neck, not much need is left for any ingenuity. However, the captain asked us to postpone our book-dinner; some said on account of bad weather ahead, or was it because he did not want a life-boat putting into a strange port with people in it dressed as devils and cardinals, and horsemen of the Apocalypse?

The Great Bear's back lifted still higher over the horizon, as he pointed with his hind leg to the North Star, which we could not yet see. The seas became less luminous by night and more lovely by day. The waves grew bigger, and, if not brighter, seemed to have more colours in them than had the eternal sapphire of the tropics. Sometimes as a wave came towards us we saw a most brilliant green light break out in its crest before it fell, as though it carried some enormous bright pale emerald that it had just dragged up from the treasuries of the sea. These waves one by one entirely hid neighbouring ships, or sometimes a wave broke over one of them, entirely covering its decks with a bright cascade of white water. And then one week we saw what something about it made us take for an English seagull, and one bright morning we felt that we had returned to our own climate. About the time that we were somewhere off the coast of France, though a very long way out, we heard the deplorable news that the *Gneisenau* and the *Scharnhorst* had escaped from Brest: of course it suited

our own selfish interests that these two deadly monsters should have left our neighbourhood that day, but the news was deplorable, for all that, and against the interests of every civilized man. And then the weather played for us as the cards of a card-sharper play for him; that is to say we got each day exactly the weather we wanted, haze when we wanted it and storm when we needed it most. One day the Chief Steward came into the saloon and advised us to lie down if we should hear any unusual noises. An attack, he said, was to be apprehended from the air. But visibility that day was only a mile or so, and whoever was out looking for us had all his trouble for nothing. About that time a corvette turned round and came past us, and we heard the roar of its gramophone, all out, playing a dance-tune. I don't think that we needed the assurance that the sole care of those on board the corvette was at that time dancing; though, as it actually turned out, they had nothing more serious to do. And that night a storm came up, and I realized the next morning from my steward's expression, as he looked without any curiosity at the wreck of my cabin, that all the other cabins were in the same state. That was one result of the storm, and another was, as we heard at once on the wireless, that a German bomber had crashed at Cork and all on board it were killed. Nobody in the West of Ireland was going to protect us, and besides our gallant escort, we had only that good storm.

And at last we came in sight of the Cliffs of Whare, which I mentioned in the last verse of my poem *A Journey.* However much solid material one has out of which to make a poem, and I had it in plenty for that one, one must use imagination to put it together, and the Cliffs of Whare are the highest point to which my imagination climbed in that poem. A censor may be supposed to deal rather with the sheer facts of prose than with the fancies of poetry, but there are times when a censor cries out for imagination, and so I gave it to him with the Cliffs of Whare, and the lines passed safely by, whereas any literal description of a port at which ships come in from their wanderings, and any less imaginative name, would have been rightly removed with a razor-blade. There we saw snow again.

In our absence my old friend and agent, Brigadier General Hammond, had died, and I went to Ireland to gather up as well as I could the now loose ends of the work he had done so ably for so many years. And, when we got to Ireland, at first we rested and, when that was no longer necessary, we gradually settled down to grow old there, as everybody round us seemed doing in that mellow and indolent climate. I realize that nothing that I do

here can be of much interest, and so I feel it is time to close this book. I did write a poem on September 14th and 15th, 1942, called "Ulysses Bound to the Mast," which, though only about a twentieth of the length of my one long poem, is possibly the best poem that I have done: — I wrote it upon a theme that I had had in my head ever since I was 22; briefly the idea is that Ulysses, having once heard the sirens sing, can never really care for much else again. And now I had had a long journey, and seen Greece, and sailed upon seas on which Ulysses had been troubled by hostile gods and by monsters, and the old feeling came upon me again of comparison with any bright adventure and the possible tameness of the years ahead, and I wrote this poem. It was published in *The Fortnightly* in January 1943 and two people kindly wrote to me about it: two is not many, but it had not passed quite unnoticed. I wrote some other poems and one day I started writing a book called *Guerrilla*, in which things I had thought about in Kent and scenes I had looked on in Greece blended together, and a wonderful lot of little details found their places and dropped into them, so that I wrote the book in shorter time than I have ever given to a novel before, thirty-eight days of actual writing, forty-two days from the date on which I started. Then I wrote *While The Sirens Slept,* and this book to follow after it, but that is rather garrulity than art, for these two volumes deal with facts, and art's material is something rarer and lighter. There are things in this book that I believe would have interested me when I was a boy, but I cannot hope that that interest will be much for the people of this generation, to whom war and adventure are what tea-parties and tall hats were to the Victorians, things of every day, and I realize that millions of people have travelled as far as I have, while millions stayed at home by the fire, but that fire was the Fire of London.

And now, looking back on the things I saw, I have a thankful feeling about some of the greater of them, which I expressed in a verse of my long poem that I wrote about the time we were leaving Africa, and with which I end this book:

Great company of mountains, now farewell.
You and the Thousand Hills and Karkloof's sires
These times have shown me, and the Sphinx as well,
And the war raging over English shires,
And mom on the Acropolis, and fires

Golden and sudden in Piraeus bay;
And I am as some traveller who tires,
And yet rejoices, at the end of day,
Because immortals walked beside him on his way.

The Biography



Lord Dunsany, c. 1918

DUNSANY THE DRAMATIST by Edward Hale Bierstadt



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Courtesy of Mitchell Kennerley

LORD DUNSANY IN HIS SERVICE UNIFORM

The original frontispiece

TO LOUISE

THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED; FOR IT WAS HER HAND THAT FIRST UNLOCKED FOR ME THE GOLDEN GATES OF THE UNDREAMED CITY OF WONDER, AND IT WAS SHE WHO FIRST LED ME THROUGH THE WONDROUS STREETS TO THE LORD OF THAT CITY — DUNSANY.

PREFACE TO THE REVISED EDITION

AT the time this study of Lord Dunsany's work was being written, communication with Great Britain through the ordinary channels was so slow, and often so uncertain, as to be almost prohibitive for my purposes. Added to this, Lord Dunsany was with his regiment, and those to whom I should otherwise have written were so scattered that it was hardly feasible to get in touch with them. In this eventuality I fell back on the notes I had been making for several years on Dunsany's work, and I was fortunate also in finding several members of the original Abbey Theater Company who were in America, as well as others who knew Dunsany professionally and personally. From these sources, and from some which need not be mentioned here, I drew the scanty material for the sketch of The Man, knowing that it must be painfully incomplete, but hoping that it might be sufficiently accurate to convey some idea of the personality behind the plays and tales. To assist in doing this I included such of Lord Dunsany's letters as seemed to me most pertinent, and in this edition I have added to these two recent letters which also bear on the plays, to which in time I hope to add others.

The book having been published, I asked Lord Dunsany to take a copy and make notes at his leisure of any errors of fact that he might find, and to comment upon any points, as seemed advisable to him. A few days ago the book came back to me with Lord Dunsany's marginal notes, thus enabling me to make full corrections. In the Appendix I have changed the text to correspond with the notes, but in the body of the book I have thought it would be more interesting, for the present at least, and not less valuable if I let the text stand, and simply included the corrections in the Preface, in Lord Dunsany's own language. In this way all the notes have gone in, in one manner or another, so that hereafter if I confess to error it must be that of theory rather than of fact — and in theory we are all fallible twice over. With apologies for this *apologia,* which under the circumstances seemed advisable, I will turn to the notes themselves.

On page ten Lord Dunsany says:

It was at my Mother's place, Dunstall Priory, Shoreham, Kent, that I spent my earliest youth. It is, I think, a more beautiful place than my place in Meath, and the window of my nursery faced the sunset. I mention this because I think that of those hills and sunsets much of the poet in me is

compounded. As for newspapers, I think it was just that they were considered more suitable for "grown-ups" than for small boys. Then for a long time I never took to reading them when I was grown up. But I thank Heaven I didn't, and so escaped their style.

It was at Cheam School that I got most of the Bible, and got to know it pretty well. There also I was taught Greek before I went to Eton.

Then as to the facsimile of the letter which faces page twelve:

I think that this letter must have been done with a pen that I had made myself, as I often do, out of the feather of some large bird I have shot; and it looks as if it was not one of my successes. But there is pleasure in making anything, and even a certain romance in writing with a pen that has sailed on who knows what mysterious journeys anywhere between the Equator and the Arctic.

I said that Lord Dunsany was "quite six feet two", and to this he replies:

No, six feet four ever since I left Eton. I used to be slender, but I wouldn't call myself so now.

Before this, however, in reference to his working at night, he says:

I have very seldom written at night. Even if I get in late from hunting, and that in the winter is about six. I wrote a good deal of "The Gods of the Mountain" latish one night in London, but that was an exception. My time for writing has nearly always been between tea and dinner, that is, beginning at four, and sometimes going on as long as eight. I always found tea a stimulant for ideas, and wrote after tea for that reason, but I never shifted the hour for tea earlier than four, thinking stimulants to be bad out of due season, even though only tea.

The remark that he was rather poor for a peer (I repel any accusation of deliberate alliteration in the phrasing, but the thought is a bit naïve I confess) on page thirteen, Lord Dunsany cannot subscribe to. He says:

Not yet. But no doubt I shall be when we begin paying for breakages caused by "The" Kaiser while at large.

On page fifteen the statement that Dunsany went with his regiment to Gallipoli was corrected in the Second Edition which he did not have at the time he wrote.

I was not at Gallipoli, unluckily, or perhaps luckily.

I spoke of "the Dublin riots", and Lord Dunsany makes the whimsical comment:

I wouldn't have said that either side was rioting. However — A rose by any other name would smell as sweet. — SHAKESPEARE.

Of the lines quoted from his Introduction to Francis Ledwidge's book of verse, on page sixteen, Dunsany says:

I am glad to remember that the lines you have quoted have pleased Stephen Phillips a true poet, now dead.

And as I write this the news has come that Francis Ledwidge has been killed in battle. He was twenty-six years old.

On page one hundred and twenty-five I made the comment: "There is always one scene in 'King Argimenes and the Unknown Warrior' for which we look from the very outset, and which never comes.... This is the meeting of the two kings, Argimenes and Darniak." Lord Dunsany's statement in reference to this is most interesting.

I had this situation originally. Darniak comes on and finds Argimenes there. He cries out, "Another holds my throne. Illuriel has turned against me!" But when staged (after a fashion) at the Abbey Theater the ensuing fight looked so like a badly run football match that I altered it.

I hope that it will not seem out of place to add to my criticism here, and to say that this scene, which I characterized as a *scène à faire,* demands that the two kings hold the stage alone. It is a contest and contrast between them personally, and the very strength of the scene lies in this. The addition of the opposing armies, whether they are there all the time or whether they enter at the end, must to a very great extent nullify the value of the scene itself.

In the programme of the English production, and in that of the first American production of "The Gods of the Mountain", Lord Dunsany called the seven gods "The Others" so as not to give away the secret to the audience. In the Portmanteau Theater production, all reference to the gods seems to have been omitted. It is an unimportant point, but as Dunsany mentions it, it is included. From the stand- point of acting, the gods have small parts, and the players would doubtless not feel their omission from the printed cast; on the other hand the phrase "The Others" seems calculated to arouse interest and anticipation by its very mystery.

Lord Dunsany mentions that he was present at the original production of "The Tents of the Arabs" in Paris, and he includes the interesting information that both "The Tents of the Arabs" and "The Golden Doom" were refused by Yeats for the Abbey Theater. And that after having

produced “The Glittering Gate” and “King Argimenes and the Unknown Warrior”!

Finally Dunsany gives a list of his plays in the order in which he values them.

1. Alexander 2. The Laughter of the Gods 3. The Gods of the Mountain 4. The King of the Golden Isles 5. The Old King’s Tale 6. The Queen’s Enemies 7. The Golden Doom 8. A Night at an Inn 9. Cheeze (or more likely Cheezo)

10. The Ginger Cat.
11. Fame and the Poet.
12. Argimenes.
13. The Tents of the Arabs.
14. The Lost Silk Hat.
15. The Glittering Gate.
16. The Murderers.

It is a strong temptation to hesitate here long enough to comment on this list, and it is probable that some of us might be disposed to take issue with the author’s valuation of his work. Only Time can give the true answer, and Time is very busy these days in making history, which seems a rather futile pursuit after all. But it may be questioned whether “The Laughter of the Gods” is as fine as “The Gods of the Mountain”; and whether “The Queen’s Enemies” is a better play than “A Night at an Inn”; and even whether “Argimenes” is to be rated over “The Tents of the Arabs.” Such a list will always provoke much argument, and we all cannot hope to agree either with the author or with each other. Such a valuation usually has no importance in itself, but only through the person who gives it, but in this instance it is of real significance both in itself, and in the deductions to which it gives rise.

We have entered upon another year of war, and we are about to enter upon a new theatrical season. With both of these Lord Dunsany will be intimately connected, although in terribly different capacities. The incongruity between the two shocks one at first, when they are placed in juxtaposition, but art is part of that civilization for which Dunsany is fighting, and for which Ledwidge, Rupert Brooke, and others have already given their lives. One could wish that art in the truly fine sense might find more room in the theater than it has heretofore, that it might in some degree

be more worthy of the sacrifice accorded it. It is pleasant to feel that, come what may, the American theater and the American public have given to Dunsany's work credit according to his value, and that they will continue to do so; and it is even an inspiration to know that in Lord Dunsany's PREFACE TO REVISED EDITION work that portion of civilization which we know as art has received some justification. Men fight less for land than for the dreams they have builded upon it; in defending their homes they contend far less for their worldly goods than for those unworldly goods by which their houses are occupied; a hero finds his inspiration not in his belly, but in his soul, and he whose dream is highest will fight the hardest, for he has something on his side that is not of this earth only.

Lord Dunsany has said that those who are taking part in this war will carry the memory always with them, for they have seen the real, the imperishable things of life. These things are reflected in Dunsany's plays, and it is that which makes them worthy.

E. H. BIERSTADT.

October 1,1917.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

IT is with pleasure that I acknowledge here my indebtedness to Stuart Walker for valuable material used in this book, and for photographs of those of the Dunsany plays which were produced in the Portmanteau Theater.

Miss Alice Lewisohn has also placed me under obligations by permitting me to use her picture of Lord Dunsany, as well as by aiding me with certain material. The Neighborhood Playhouse has provided me with pictures, as has Mitchell Kennerley, and to them too I am indebted.

It is through the courtesy of Sam Hume, Director of the Arts and Crafts Theater of Detroit, that I am able to use the picture showing "The Tents of the Arabs" in production. The set for this play was designed by Mr. Hume and is especially beautiful.

To Padraic Colum, and to J. M. Kerrigan, I am obliged for information about the Dunsany plays, and for material concerning Lord Dunsany himself — which I trust they will not regret having given! And to my friend Barrett H. Clark I express my gratitude for his never-failing patience, and kindly — though somewhat caustic — criticism!

This is a long list of acknowledgments for so small a book, and rightly the list should be even longer. I have no excuse to offer, but in explanation I suggest that a certain number of "accomplices before the fact" are sometimes highly to be desired.

E. H. B.

I. THE MAN

FOR about the last quarter century, or from the time when Ibsen began to come into his own, the history of literature is at one with the history of the drama. The great literary artists of this period have nearly all chosen the dramatic medium, and, though they have not confined themselves to it exclusively by any means, the more notable of their works have found expression in this form. The nineteenth century was undeniably that of the novel; the twentieth seems to be quite as unmistakably that of the play.

In those countries where the drama assumed proportions of a national movement the development was for the most part gradual, its scope widening as its intensity increased. There are definite reasons why the dramatic art should tend toward "national" expression in a greater degree than any other of the arts. The most fundamental reason may well be that the drama is part and parcel of the art of the theater, and that the theater is the great co-operative art. Co-operation, in theory at any rate, is our inheritance from the last century; there is hardly a phase of life where its influence has not become evident in a greater or less degree, but in the arts there seems to be but one logical outlet for the trend. That outlet is the theater, and the spirit of co-operation has perhaps been one of the greatest factors in instilling a new and increased vitality into the theatric and dramatic arts. It is strange, and yet not so strange, that one of the least co-operative countries on earth should have felt this influence so keenly. This country is Ireland, and it is perhaps because of the hyper-sensitiveness of the Irish people that they reacted so sharply to an element which was in reality foreign to them. And it is again perhaps because that element *was* alien that Ireland having reached a pinnacle of greatness permitted the movement to decline until now it seems to have little besides a past. The inherent inability of the Irish to co-operate successfully over an extended period of time was, however, but one of the factors that brought about the change. The great war, and that rising among the intellectuals in Ireland that soon followed it, were fatally destructive elements, if only in the dreadful loss of life which they entailed. But Ireland has contributed her share, and more than her share, to the great dramatic movement that has swept the nations. It was about 1899 that W. B. Yeats and Edward Martyn inaugurated the Irish Literary Theater in Dublin. At this time Lord Dunsany was in the

Transvaal with his regiment, for the Boer war had just started. That is doubtless one reason why we do not hear of him until the Irish literary movement had been under way for some years; indeed it was in 1909, ten years afterwards, that "The Glittering Gate", Dunsany's first play, was produced at the Abbey Theater. There is no necessity to recapitulate here the history of the Irish Literary Theater or the Abbey Theater Company as it finally became. That history has already been written. Great names are connected with it — Yeats, Moore, Martyn, Hyde, "A. E.", Robinson, Ervine, Shaw, Colum, Lady Gregory, Synge, and Dunsany have all had their share, as well as many others, in developing a national dramatic literature which has spread its influence over the entire English speaking race. The drama so generated and developed was a direct reaction against the drama fathered by Ibsen, and yet to a certain extent there is a superficial resemblance between the two. The form is the same certainly, and so also is the terminology. That is, we have people who are true to life speaking lines which are equally true. But the philosophy, the point of view which was brought to bear on the work was essentially dissimilar. This has been summed up well and succinctly by Edwin Björkman:

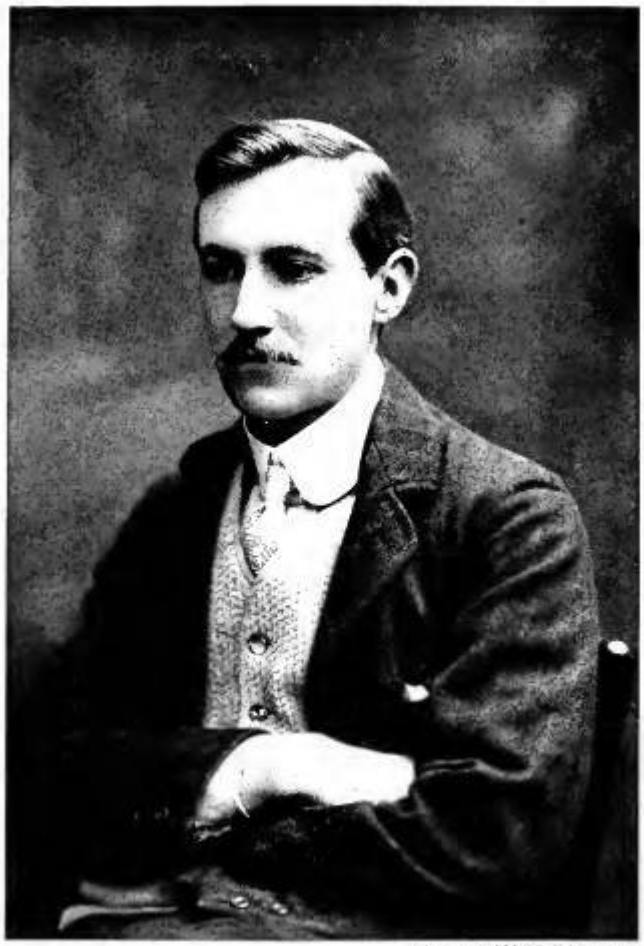
"Observation and imagination are the basic principles of all poetry. It is impossible to conceive a poetical work from which one of them is wholly absent. Observation without imagination makes for obviousness; imagination without observation turns into nonsense. What marks the world's greatest poetry is perhaps the presence in almost equal proportions of both of these principles. But as a rule we find one of them predominating, and from this one-sided emphasis the poetry of the period derives its character as realistic or idealistic.

"The poetry of the middle of the nineteenth century made a fetish of observation. It came as near to excluding imagination as it could without ceasing entirely to be poetry. That such exaggeration should sooner or later result in a sharp reaction was natural."

Once grant Mr. Björkman's premise (it is certainly a fair one), and it is clear that it is to the British Isles we must look for that new voice among the singers of the world, for since the Renaissance, Britain has always produced the greatest poets, just as France has given us the greatest painters, and Germany the finest musicians. Out of Ireland it came, and that land, waking out of its long winter's sleep, blossomed and flowered in overpowering abundance. The hand that waked the sleeper was that of Yeats. It was he

who discovered Synge — the greatest genius of them all — and it was he who found Dunsany. It will be well perhaps to pause and tell a little something of Dunsany himself before we turn to his work. Vital statistics are not always interesting, but they are often necessary, and so let us try if we can come so close to the man as to understand and appreciate his plays and his point of view a little better.

Lord Dunsany's family name is Edward John Moreton Drax Plunkett, or it might be more correct to say that those are his Christian and his family names. He is the eighteenth Baron of his line, and his name and ancestry are said to be the third oldest in Irish history. In 1899 he succeeded to the title, and to the family estates in Meath. These estates comprise many acres of the most historic land in Ireland, and within sight of Dunsany Castle rises the great Hill of Tara, famous in song and story. Born in 1878, Lord Dunsany was educated at Eton and Sandhurst, and then entered the army. He saw active service with the Coldstream Guards during the South African war,) and there is a faint memory of the hardships undergone at this period in "King Argimenes and the Unknown Warrior", when the slaves cry for the bones of the King's great dog to eat. There was a time in South Africa when there were not even bones. It is interesting too to observe that Lord Dunsany's uncle is Sir Horace Plunkett, who laboured so long and earnestly to introduce the idea of co-operation in agriculture among the peasants in Ireland. It was Sir Horace who took "A. E." from a clerk's office, upon Yeats' recommendation be it noted, to send him as ambassador among the rural classes in Ireland, and this was the beginning of "A. E.'s" career. Somehow one always comes back to Yeats. But now I must return to Dunsany. His family, by the way, are said to be of Danish origin, and to have settled in Ireland sometime before the Norman conquest. Perhaps that is one reason why his gods are not the gods of Ireland; one reason why there is a strain of northern mysticism, weird, indefinable, and implacable withal running through his work.



Courtesy of Mitchell Kennerley

EDWARD JOHN MORETON DRAX PLUNKETT, LORD DUNSANY

It must have been about 1902 or 1903 when we first find mention of Dunsany in connection with the literary movement in Ireland. George Moore remarks in speaking of A. E., "He was offered some hundreds of pounds by Lord Dunsany to found a review, but he had not time to edit it, and proposed John Eglinton.

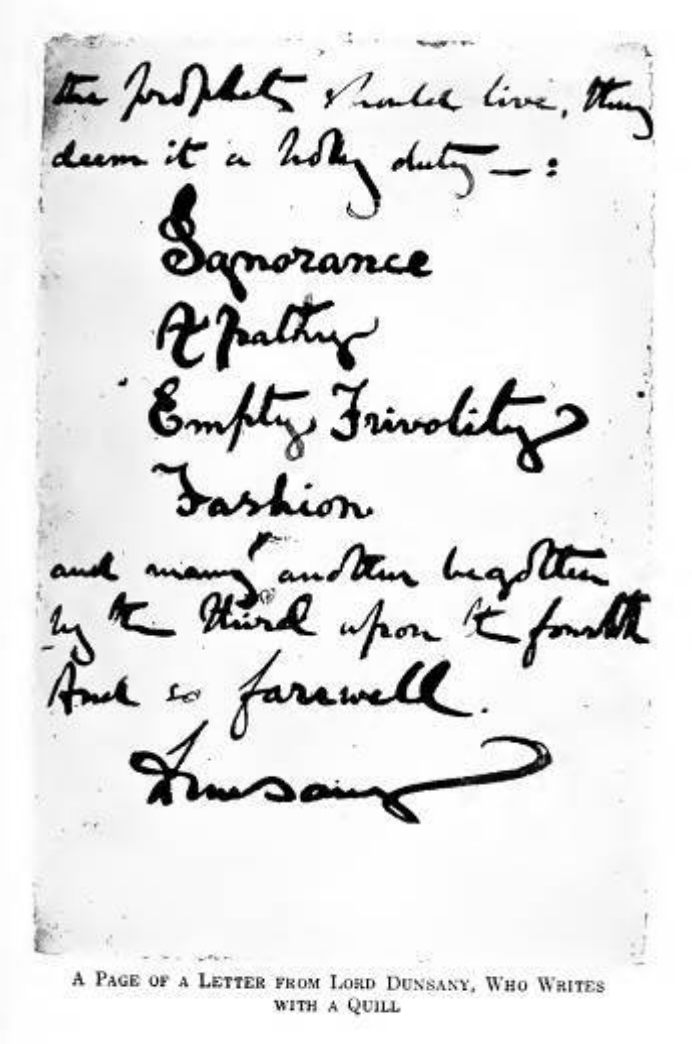
'Contrairy John' wanted to see life steadily, and to see it whole; and Yeats came along with a sneer, and said: 'I hear, Lord Dunsany, that you are going to supply groundsel for A. E.'s canaries.' The sneer brought the project to naught... And so the review was not founded. Nevertheless this must have been Dunsany's initial entrance as a patron of art. His first published book was issued in 1905, but his first play did not appear until

1909, when “The Glittering Gate” was put on at the Abbey Theater, Dublin. “King Argimenes and the Unknown Warrior” followed in February of 1911 at the Abbey, and the next June “The Gods of the Mountain” went on at the Haymarket Theater, London. Then came “The Golden Doom” at the Haymarket in November of 1912, after which it was played successfully through a number of Russian cities. The productions of both “The Gods of the Mountain” and “The Golden Doom” were entirely successful, the first so much so that William A. Brady, the American producer, brought the production intact from the Haymarket, except as to cast, and put it on in Buffalo, New York. It failed promptly for reasons which will be taken up when we come to consider the individual plays. This was in the summer of 1912. (The next production was that of “The Lost Silk Hat” by B. Iden Payne at Manchester in August of 1913, during the repertory season there. In 1914 Mr. Philip Carr gave “The Tents of the Arabs” its first production in Paris, and in the same year “The Glittering Gate” was put on at the Neighborhood Playhouse, New York, to be followed by “A Night at an Inn” and “The Queen’s Enemies” in 1916, all at the same theater. These last two plays have not as yet had an English production. Thus the season of 1916 was a splendid one for Dunsany in America, for at the same time that “The Queen’s Enemies” was put on at the Neighborhood Playhouse, “The Gods of the Mountain”, “King Argimenes and the Unknown Warrior”, and “The Golden Doom” were staged by Stuart Walker in his Portmanteau Theater which may be said to be of New York, Tientsin, and Thalanna, for it is a traveling theater. The productions of the Dunsany plays were most beautifully done, however, and all New York was Dunsany mad on the instant. That is roughly the history of Dunsany’s dramatic career. It covers only eight years, but surely those eight years have come to a most wonderful fruition.

Lord Dunsany’s style is at once the wonder and admiration of his contemporaries; wonder at its sheer, limpid beauty, its melodic charm — sometimes his lines are perfect hexameters, reminiscent of Homer in their colour and beat — and admiration of the artistry with which he uses the material that has been given him. This style seems to have been due in some part to a process of rather involuntary elimination. During his youth at Dunsany Castle he was never allowed to see or to read a newspaper lest he become contaminated by the filth circulated in the daily press. His books were watched over as carefully, and for many years no style seemed to him

natural but that of the Bible. “I feared that I would never become a writer when I saw that other people did not use it,” said he in speaking of this period. With the Bible he was permitted Grimm’s and Hans Andersen’s fairy tales, and soon afterwards he was able to recognize his like in the splendour of the literature of the Golden Age of Greece. This has remained, I believe, his strongest influence, affecting both his manner of expression and his point of view. The lovely imagery of the Greeks, and the pure melody of their lines, are reflected in his style, and in his philosophy may be found man in his relationship to the gods or to the cosmos even as it was in the “olden, golden evenings” of Euripides.

To be the best pistol shot in Ireland is no small boast, but it is one that Lord Dunsany can make if he so wishes. He is a keen cricketer too, and has been captain of his County Club team. Often he is off for all day in the saddle, for he is a good horseman, and on these days his writing is done in the wee, small hours. Altogether Dunsany leads the life of the normal, healthy Anglo-Saxon, loving the out of doors, and rejoicing greatly in it all from the warmth of the sun to the glistening dew, and the cool splendour of the moonlight. There is not a morbid bone in his body and that is why, when I hear him compared rapturously with Strindberg, I am forced to smile. He is happy in his friends, and in his wife and little boy, and only desires to be allowed to remain so. Lady Dunsany is the daughter of Lord Jersey. She is intellectual, and she is attractive, perhaps charming would be a better word though it is somewhat overused, and for the purposes of the present sketch it will be enough to say that she is an ideal wife for such a husband. Picture to yourself Lord Dunsany and his guest Bernard Shaw sailing paper boats in the pond at Dunsany Castle, and see whether you too cannot get the eternal spirit of childhood which makes such a scene not only possible but keenly pleasurable to the participants. Did you never sail paper boats, and would you not like to do it again?



A Page of a Letter from Lord Dunsany, Who Writes with a Quill

As I said, much of Dunsany's work is done at night, and, it is an infinitely small point but an amusing one, it is all done with quill pens, a large supply of which he keeps before him. I remember when I first saw a letter from him I wondered whether he used a brush as the Japanese do. It seemed to me that nothing else would make such great lines. His work is not methodical; he does it when the fit is on him, and there is no reason why he should not, for he is not only independent of the public economically, but mentally and spiritually as well. Yet he is eager for praise, as who is not who has respect for his work? He is intensely desirous of being accepted by the public, of having others love his gods as he does. And yet appreciation has come to him slowly. His first book was published at his own expense,

and even the illustrator was paid by him. I saw a first edition of this book the other day listed at fifteen times the original retail price. Publishers seemed to think that a "Lord" had not to think of money, yet Lord Dunsany is not rich as such things go nowadays. For a poet he is without doubt fabulously wealthy, but for a peer he is rather poor. One of his chief characteristics is his intense eagerness. This quality is apparent in his attitude toward everything; his work, his play, his desire for appreciation, and his whole outlook upon life as a whole and in particular. Eager is a very good word to use in that connection, for it conveys in some wise that naïveté of which it is an essential part.

It is said, even by his friends, that Lord Dunsany is the worst dressed man in Ireland. "He looks," remarked one of these friends, "as if he'd stood there naked, and had his clothes hurled at him, leaving them wherever they happened to land." I may be wrong, but I believe this statement is slightly exaggerated. However — ! In appearance Lord Dunsany is tall, quite six feet two, and rather slender, with fair hair, and kindly eyes from which the wonder has not yet vanished, and with the most exquisitely sensitive mouth in the world. Was it not Thoreau, by the way, who said: "Who am I to complain who have not yet ceased to wonder?" Lord Dunsany is like that.

His attitude toward his title of Peer as well as his title of Poet is immensely characteristic of the man. Though he is the eighteenth Baron of his line his dignity has lost none of its freshness for him in tradition; rather it has gained. Strangers meeting him for the first time sometimes go away feeling that he is too haughty for them, but they do not understand. He *is* haughty, and he *is* proud when the occasion warrants it, but it is never the *hauteur* or the false pride of a snob. It is simply his absolute sense of the fitness of things. It is as if he said — what is the use of having a title or of being a poet if you don't get all the fun out of it that you can? The attitude of a small boy toward his first pair of long trousers, or of a girl toward her first lover is entirely similar. But perhaps the best comparison is to say that Lord Dunsany and Don Quixote are very nearly one and the same. To know that he is a Baron with centuries of tradition behind him, to realize that his great estates are a historic landmark in Ireland, and then above all to be a Poet into the bargain — what more could the heart of small boy or Dunsany himself wish for? And how he must enjoy it all!

Lord Dunsany is an Imperialist of the Imperialists largely, I think, because it satisfies his sense of romance. Once on a time Lord Dunsany was

candidate at the elections, and his joy passed the bounds of enthusiasm when he found that he was beaten. Politics do not interest him except as they serve to complete the picture. He sees himself as a romantic, a feudal figure, and because he does so see himself he is one. But his point of view on all this is that of the joyous child playing with glittering toys, and seeking new worlds to conquer over the sand hills. G. K. Chesterton, in "Manalive", drew Dunsany's picture for once and all.

At the beginning of the present war Lord Dunsany was Captain in the 5th Royal Innis-killing Fusiliers. Until he was wounded in the Dublin riots he was stationed in Londonderry whipping men into shape for the trenches; then, before leaving for the front in December, 1916, he was, for a time, in barracks recovering from his wound. In his company was Francis Ledwidge, the Irish poet whom Dunsany himself discovered. Ledwidge is of peasant stock, a poet of the soil, and the beauty of his lyrics might perchance have been lost to the world had it not been for Dunsany's kindly interest. It was Dunsany who wrote the Introduction to Ledwidge's first book of verse, and in this Introduction is a passage which in its summing up of Ledwidge sums up Dunsany himself so well that I shall quote it here.

Of pure poetry there are two kinds, that which mirrors the beauty of the world in which our bodies are, and that which builds the more mysterious kingdoms, where geography ends and fairyland begins, with gods and heroes at war, and the sirens singing still, and Alph going down to the darkness from Xanadu. Mr. Ledwidge gives us the first kind.



LORD DUNSANY
Captain, 5th Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers

And Lord Dunsany gives us the second. *it* was for Yeats that Lord Dunsany's first play was written. Yeats wanted a play for the Abbey Theater and, though Dunsany had never written a play, Yeats asked him to try what he could do. "The Glittering Gate" was the result, one which never pleased its author, feeling as he did its vagueness and its faulty construction. The play is much less important in itself than in its indication of what might follow. It was Yeats, too, who at this time gave Dunsany the only lesson he ever had in dramatic construction; the pupil has advanced far beyond his master now. "Surprise," said Yeats, "is what is necessary. Surprise, and then more surprise, and that is all." However greatly Dunsany's plays have grown in other ways it can never be said at least that this early lesson was wasted, for to this day surprise is one of their chief elements of delight. But such a bit of advice from the gentle Yeats might have ruined the work of

one who had less dramatic instinct than Dunsany. And does not what I have said about the man himself show the presence of such instinct quite apart from the plays?

The three great contemporary dramatic poets of Ireland are Synge, Dunsany, and Yeats.

Now while comparisons are said to be odious they are at the same time often enlightening, and it may not be amiss to compare in a general way these three men who stand at the top of the great literary movement of the day.

Dunsany and Yeats are alike in that they both are more interested in ideas than in people. Therein lies at once their strength and their weakness. Of the three Synge was the only one who knew poverty and misfortune in plenitude; his whole life was such as to emphasize the human element, as the lives of Dunsany and Yeats have been to make this element of less account. They have lived in a dream world. A poet considers things and people in three ways — in their relation to themselves, in their relation to each other, and in their relation to the whole. The greatest poet is he who in his work is able to see and to express things in all three ways. Synge's weakness lay in the fact that as a rule he saw people in their relation to themselves and to each other, but not in their relationship to the whole scheme of things. It is only in one play, his greatest, "Riders to the Sea", that he achieved and made plain this triple relationship, and that play alone marks a height to which no one of his fellows has yet been able to climb. "Riders to the Sea" is one of the great masterpieces of modern drama. George Moore rated it below "The Well of the Saints" because it was less of the soil, which is to say less local, but that which Moore pointed out as its weakness is in reality its strength; that is what makes it akin to the Greek drama, its realization of man in his relation to the cosmos, of his impotency, and of the great cosmic implacability. "Riders to the Sea" is, however, an isolated example of this quality in Synge's work. Yeats and Dunsany err on the other side: their outlook is almost entirely cosmic, man is removed from man, and is considered only in reference to the gods, the fairies, or whatever it is that represents the whole. A poet must have his head in the clouds, but his feet must be touching on Mother Earth. The feet of both Dunsany and Yeats are often striding through the skies where mortals cannot follow. This is much less true of Dunsany, who achieves a far better balance in his work than Yeats, but it is sufficiently true of them both to be defined as a

limitation. Synge, with both feet hard on the ground, thrust his head for a moment through the upper air and in that instant achieved immortality.

In style, which is to say beauty and clarity of expression, there cannot be much doubt but that Dunsany stands alone. Since William Morris no such English has been written." It is in this regard that Yeats becomes obscure, and Synge occasionally colloquial. Moore in speaking of Yeats remarks that "he attempted a joke, but it got lost in the folds of his style." Unfortunately too many of his ideas have been lost in that same manner. His style is rich, but it is rarely clear; whereas with Synge, his style is clear, but it is not always rich. But with Dunsany, his style is both rich and clear beyond desire. There is nothing that he cannot say, and in the saying make more beautiful or more dramatic than can another. His greatest thoughts as well as his smallest are all expressed so simply, and yet so exquisitely that a child can understand and feel the sheer beauty. There is a music, and a magic harmony in his lines that no other living writer can imitate.

From a dramatic standpoint Synge and Dunsany are very fairly matched. Yeats is so much less a dramatist than a poet that it is difficult to consider him in this connection. Through the work of both Synge and Dunsany one finds errors of dramaturgy side by side with magnificent examples of perfect structure. It is probable that "Riders to the Sea", masterpiece though it is, would have been better in two acts than in one, and it is certain that "King Argimenes and the Unknown Warrior" would have been a better play in three acts than in two. On the ether hand, "In the Shadow of the Glen" and "A Night at an Inn"' are wellnigh perfect one act plays so far as construction is concerned. They might well stand by themselves as a criterion of excellence.

For some time past it would be fair to say that the point of view of the literary artist was entirely microcosmic, and that is one reason why we hail Dunsany with such a sense of relief, even of quiet and of gratitude. Yeats too has attempted to bring us closer to the great heart of things, but his fairies and heroes are of local origin, while Dunsany's gods are universal if they are anything. This was the immense advantage Dunsany achieved in creating his own mythology; he was not bound by place or time, and the only associations his characters have are those of the infinite. His expression is universal in the broadest sense, and upon the theory of universality is founded the philosophy of art. Man becomes tired of himself, and fatigued with his fellows, and when this time comes his only peace is to

be found in his relation to the infinite. A part becomes sated with itself or with another part, but upon the whole it may feed eternally. But I fear that in my own desire to clarify I have only confused, and that from the philosophy upon which art is founded I have wandered almost into metaphysics, so faint is the dividing line between them. It is only a critic who is so foolish as to try to explain the beautiful or to think that it can need explanation.

II. HIS WORK

IT will be well now to take each of Lord Dunsany's plays in turn and see what may be gained by a brief analysis of its structure and of its meaning, and in so doing let us take them chronologically, for to list them at once in the order of their importance would be to anticipate the work at hand.

THE GLITTERING GATE

The scene is a Lonely Place, and the time the Present.

The Lonely Place is strewn with large black rocks and uncorked beer-bottles, the latter in great profusion. At back is a wall of granite built of great slabs and in it the Gate of Heaven. The door is of gold.

Below the Lonely Place is an abyss hung with stars.

The two characters of the piece are Jim, lately a burglar, for he is dead, and Bill, likewise deceased, who was a pal of Jim's on earth.

Jim was hanged and Bill was shot, and the marks of their recent ordeal are still upon them. Jim has been dead the longer, so that he is there first. Bill finds him uncorking empty beer bottles endlessly and throwing them away, as he enters and knocks on the Gate of Heaven. Each time that Jim finds himself deceived by the empty bottles faint and unpleasant laughter is heard from somewhere in the great void. Bill recalls to Jim the little things of their life together and gradually Jim remembers. Finding the great door immovable before him Bill recollects that he has still with him his old jemmy, "nut-cracker", so with it he tries to drill open the huge Gate of Heaven. Jim takes little interest in the endeavour until suddenly the door begins to yield. Then they both give themselves up to imagining all the wonders that will confront them on the other side of the closed door. Bill is sure that his mother will be there, and Jim thinks of a yellow-haired girl whom he remembers as a bar-maid at Wimbledon. Of a sudden the drill goes through and the great door swings slowly open, and — there is nothing there but the great blue void, hung with twinkling stars.

BILL, (*staggering and gazing into the revealed Nothing, in which jar stars go wandering*) Stars. Blooming great stars. There *ain't* no heaven, Jim.

(Ever since the revelation a cruel and violent laugh has arisen off. It increases in volume and grows louder and louder.)

JIM. That's like them. That's very like them. Yes, they'd do that!

(The curtain falls and the laughter still howls on.)

This play has been pointed out as a bit of rare cynicism on the part of Lord Dunsany, but I am inclined to think that this opinion is unjustified. What he has done is simply that which he never tires of doing, of showing

man in his eternal conflict with the gods. The Gate of Heaven cannot be forced open with a jemmy, or if it is there will be found nothing on the other side. Bill and Jim are both materialists, and having broken both the law of God and man all their lives, it is thoroughly in keeping that after death they should adhere to their old beliefs, that there is nothing too strong or too sacred to be forced to serve their turn. Not to try to force the door would be wholly out of character for them, but to force it and to find heaven on the other side would violate our sense of the eternal fitness of things. Surrounded by empty beer-bottles, fitting symbols of their material life, and hounded by the mocking laugh of Nemesis, Bill and Jim can only vent their spleen in a last bitter outcry against the eternal. The old and endless balance of things is achieved, and the law is accomplished.

The play is open to several interpretations and therein lies its greatest weakness. The issue is not clearly defined and it is only in the light of Dunsany's other work that we are able to attempt a logical elucidation. A mythology such as Dunsany's presupposes a certain element of fatalism when man comes in contact with the cosmic force. It must be remembered too that Dunsany is a great *imaginative* genius, — have I not deplored his lack of interest in man as related to man? — and that imagination is a wholly mental quality. Any emotion we get from Dunsany is not one based on human attributes; for the most part it is purely æsthetic, a rapture at the beauty of his conceptions, and at his manner of expression, or a terror at the immensity and grandeur of what he shows us. Herein he is at one with the Greek dramatists, and this attitude on his part has been laid down by Aristotle as a law of tragedy centuries ago. That is why we find so little human sympathy shown in his treatment of Bill and Jim. How easy it would have been to have made this play a maudlin diatribe! But Dunsany's point of view on the problem is purely dispassionate, entirely that of an artist — and an aristocrat! And after all the little play must not be taken too seriously. It has a story to tell, and with Dunsany the story is paramount always. There is no need to attempt to read in a hidden meaning. Yeats might have written the play and if he had done so we should doubtless have had a second version of "The Hour Glass" or something closely akin to it. Indeed the influence of Yeats on this first play of Dunsany's is not to be ignored.



Photo by White studio. Courtesy of Neighborhood Playhouse

THE GLITTERING GATE

The gate opens — and there is nothing there

Dramatically "The Glittering Gate" leaves much to be desired. It most certainly furnishes an excellent example of the law of surprise, and it even provides suspense, a much more vital element, and one which is not always to be found in Dunsany's plays. How often it has been said that a dramatist must not keep anything from his audience! A genius may do all things, and as a rule Dunsany prepares us for his surprise so effectively that in the very preparation an element of suspense is created. It is interesting to observe that Dunsany here avoids an error which marks a weak spot in two of his later and bigger plays; that is, he does not attempt to bring the gods on the stage. The mocking laughter is much more mysterious and terrible when its source in unknown.

The dialogue is excellent. The language that the two dead burglars use is perfectly natural and in character, albeit the situation is grotesque. This very incongruity is highly dramatic in itself. Through the dialogue, too, runs a vein of gentle irony, as there does through every Dunsany play. Each character is developed along individual lines. Jim is frankly a cynic; Bill is more trusting — but Jim has been dead the longer.

In dénouement the play is masterly. The climax is led up to without hesitation and when the moment comes the blow is struck with deadly accuracy. Then the play is over. No further time is wasted in "past regrets or future fears.") It is not a very good play on the whole, but considering the circumstances under which it was written it is beyond question an extraordinary play. I think it is a better play than "The Queen's Enemies", which was written much later and which was successful in production. But "The Glittering Gate" will remain always one of the least popular of Dunsany's plays, for while the dialogue, the humour, the characterization, the dénouement are all done well and with infinite finish, the purpose of the play is undoubtedly vague, and no matter how capable it is of elucidation its lack of clarity detracts from the force of the piece. It could not be otherwise. The play depends on the situation and upon the dialogue to hold the interest of the audience; there is no actual opposition to the characters, none of the immediate and personal conflict for which the modern audience has been taught to look. To some people this will always be a lack in Dunsany's plays, but they could not have been written in any other way and written as well. The impotency of man is much more strongly shown when he is placed in conflict with a gigantic indefinable force; as soon as that force suffers embodiment, it is brought down to man's level, and the whole conception is destroyed.

"The Glittering Gate" stages well, and acts well; it is very short even for a one-act play, but its lack of definitiveness keeps it from being classed with the later and more forceful work of the author. None of Dunsany's plays could be described as robust; they are too delicate, and too full of finesse for that, but "The Glittering Gate" is not even vital. And notwithstanding all that, it is a most extraordinary play.

KING ARGIMENES AND THE UNKNOWN WARRIOR

The action opens in the slave fields of King Darniak, where King Argimenes, a deposed and captured monarch, is working with the slaves. King Argimenes has just finished the bone he was gnawing and laments that he has nothing more to hope for. Zarb, a slave, envies him his beautiful memories, for he himself can recall nothing better than the fact that he once went for a full year without beatings. He tells Argimenes too that the King's great dog is ill and that they may soon have more bones. Argimenes left alone goes on digging, until of a sudden he comes on a great bronze sword left there long ago by some unknown warrior.



Photo by J. M. Cummings. Courtesy of Portmanteau Theater

KING ARGIMENES AND THE UNKNOWN WARRIOR

The slaves see Argimenes kill the guard

He offers a prayer to the spirit of the departed, and conspires with Zarb to rebel against King Darniak. Zarb tells him that now he has a sword, and such a sword, the slaves will believe he is a King and will follow him. Argimenes creeps off to where the slave-guard are seated with their backs to the diggers, intending to kill the guard and arm the slaves. As the curtain falls one sees the slaves all huddled together watching Argimenes stalk the slave-guard, and at the very last a great gasp of wonder goes up from them. This scene is very remarkable. From the time when Argimenes makes his intention apparent to Zarb, to the fall of the curtain the action off stage is as clearly shown as that before the audience. Argimenes creeping through the sand hills, and then showing himself on the horizon line as he plunges downward to the attack is as clear before us as the slaves themselves as they watch and listen in awe and agony.

The second act is in the throne-room of King Darniak. The King is seated in all his glory on his throne with his four lovely Queens beside him. On his right is his idol, Illuriel, with an idol-guard in front of him. The King's Overseer brings plans for a new garden, and they are discussed by the King and Queens. A hill must be removed, terraces made, and the slaves must be flogged that the work be accomplished more quickly. Power and selfishness are very clearly and amusingly depicted. Then a Prophet comes in to prophesy, and the Queens comment caustically on the cut of his hair while the King converses aside. The Prophet warns them of the approaching doom, of an enemy within the gates, but there is no one to give him heed. When he stops, the King in a bored tone, and without listening to him, bids him continue. The Prophet goes out and the King and the Queens go to the banqueting hall. The idol-guard ruminates on the prophecies and feels a sense of disquietude. A great noise of fighting is heard without. The slaves rush in all armed and overpower the idol-guard, throwing down Illuriel and breaking him in seven pieces. They go back to face the remnants of the palace guard, and Damiak rushes in from the feast to find his idol fallen and his throne broken. He goes back in an effort to flee, for he knows that his doom is upon him. The slaves reënter with Argimenes at their head. Argimenes takes his place on the throne, and throws a cloth of gold about his shoulders. He looks the King he is and the slaves bow before him in awe and wonder. Suddenly the Keeper of the King's Great Dog comes to say that the royal beast is dead. In an instant Argimenes forgets that he is a King

once more and with a cry of “Bones!” he rushes forward, followed by the slaves. Then, recollecting himself, he returns to the throne, and with dignity commands that the King’s Great Dog be buried. “Majesty!” cries Zarb, confounded at this last token of royalty. And so the curtain falls.

It is unquestionable that the first act of this play is immeasurably superior to the second. The first has a unity, a directness, and a force which the second lacks, breaking as it does into several phases of action. From the time when King Darniak goes with his Queens into the banqueting hall to the entrance of Argimenes and the slaves there is a momentary interlude, and just here the act breaks, splitting into two sections. In the last half of the act the entrances and exits are not carefully arranged, and altogether the effect of the whole is to give the act a downward slant rather than the upward one that it should have. The play “falls off” at the conclusion. This is all due simply and solely to faulty construction. This was the first play Dunsany attempted in more than one act, and hence it must be regarded somewhat as in the nature of an experiment. Probably the play would have been better written in three acts instead of in two. The first act in that case would show King Darniak on his throne with the Queens and the Prophet; in short it would contain the material now used in the first part of act two. The second act would be the present act one just as it now stands; and act three would be composed of what is now contained in the second portion of act two. Thus we would see the splendour of Damiak on his throne, hear the prophecy, and mark his inattention to it, after which we would get the contrast of Argimenes in the slave-fields, followed by the revolt, and the overthrow of Damiak. This revolt would follow immediately and logically upon Argimenes’ slaughter of the slave-guard in act two. There is little question in my mind but that this is the proper construction for the play.

It may be well to take up here a question which has arisen concerning the acts or scenes of the Dunsany plays. When William A. Brady produced “The Gods of the Mountain” in America he called it upon the programme “A One Act Play in Three Scenes”, whereas Dunsany himself calls his divisions, acts. When “King Argimenes and the Unknown Warrior” and “The Gods of the Mountain” were produced by Stuart Walker in his Portmanteau Theater he had no hesitation in using the term “acts.” But of late the point has again arisen so that it seems desirable that we pause long enough to investigate the matter more deeply.

A play is a series of minor climaxes leading to major climaxes which in turn lead to an ultimate climax. A one-act play is a series of minor climaxes leading to one major climax which is in itself the ultimate climax. A three-act play has the major climaxes near the end of each act, and the ultimate climax near the end of the second act or during the third. A four or five act play is susceptible to the same course of reasoning. I fear that my phraseology is somewhat involved, but I have striven to be exact.

Let us try this dictum on "King Argimenes and the Unknown Warrior" and see whether or not it will stand the pragmatic test. Be it understood that these major climaxes are as a rule placed at such points in the action as will tend to divide the play conveniently. This is merely a convention of the dramatic art. Dunsany's acts are shorter than is customary, but that does not invalidate their claim to be called acts in the least, for acting time has nothing to do with the question, except as it might tend to produce lack of balance and unity. Broadly speaking, acts are natural divisions produced by emotional or intellectual climaxes.

In the first act of the play under immediate discussion the minor climaxes are the finding of the sword, and the coming of the Overseer, both leading to the major climax, the "Oh" which the slaves give as Argimenes slays the guard. In the second act the Overseer, the Prophet, the entrance of Argimenes, the destruction of Illuriel, the reëntrance of the Overseer, the incident of the King's Great Dog with the cry of "Bones!" all lead to the ultimate climax, where Argimenes orders that the dog be buried and Zarb cries "Majesty!" Note by the way that the printed version of the play makes Zarb deliver this last speech in a tone of protest, when in reality, as Dunsany himself points out, his tone should show awe. The major climax at the end of act one leads direct to the ultimate climax at the end of act two just as I said it would. "King Argimenes and the Unknown Warrior" is not as good an example as "The Gods of the Mountain" simply because the second is by far the better play. The working out of the rule I have suggested is perfectly plain in them both, however. There can be no question whether or not these plays are written in acts or scenes. "The Gods of the Mountain" is as unmistakably a three-act play as "The Amazons." But before discontinuing the discussion let me append a note to something I said a little while back. I remarked that acts are natural divisions produced by emotional or intellectual climaxes, *but* if such climaxes come at points where an interval

would be inconvenient or detrimental to the balance of the play then the necessary divisions must be arbitrarily imposed.

The slave song, the chant of the low born in the first act of "King Argimenes", and the wine song or the chant of the nobles in the second act are both interesting. When the play was first given at the Abbey Theater one of the old songs of famine time was used for the chant of the low born, and most effectively. It is immensely typical of Dunsany to have these two songs balancing each other, and presenting so forceful a contrast. The play begins and ends with the thought of bones uppermost, and this gives a certain sense of unity in contra-distinction to the otherwise faulty structure. In Argimenes there is a superficial resemblance to Agmar in "The Gods of the Mountain", and in Zarb there is a faint prophecy of Slag in the same play. This does not argue by any means that Dunsany's characters are all types, but it indicates how his characters developed, one growing out of another.

This play should dispose finally of any theory that Dunsany develops his plot at the expense of his characters. See how Argimenes, fallen almost to an animal, regains his individuality under the influence of the sword, and how the slaves, from being mere whipped curs, rise to the point of revolt under the leadership of Argimenes. Observe the study of meanness and selfishness in the scene of Damiak, the Queens, and the Overseer, and the blind ignorance depicted in the following scene with the Prophet. Here is a social study for us if we care to heed it. And then the reversion to habit in Argimenes when he hears that the King's Great Dog is dead, and his cry of "Bones!", with the awe and wonder of the slaves at the reinstated monarch. It is a most excellent bit of character work on rather broad lines. As might be expected the gods have their share in the proceedings, and the fact that the god of Argimenes was only broken in three pieces while that of Darniak, Illuriel, was broken in seven, is made to serve as a partial *raison d'etre* for the action. The last act furnishes a splendid example of peripetia in the fall of Darniak, and the victory of Argimenes.

"King Argimenes and the Unknown Warrior" is almost a good play. It presents a problem of man as opposed to man as most of the other Dunsany plays do not, and in consequence of this the conception is much less poetic, with none of the grandeur of some of the other plays.

On the other hand, the fact that we are dealing with purely human elements permits more visible opposition and direct conflict, and for this

reason one occasionally hears the play placed much higher in the scale than it deserves to be. In its characterization, its dialogue, its flashes of poetry and of wit, the play is well worth serious consideration, but in its conception, and in the faulty construction of its framework it falls far below the standard set by the major portion of Dunsany's work.

THE GODS OF THE MOUNTAIN

The first act is outside the wall of the city of Kongros. In the dust three beggars are seated who lament their poverty and that the "divine benevolence" of man is not what it used to be. To the three comes Agmar followed by his servant, Slag. Agmar is a very great beggar. The story of his adventures is told by Slag, and a practical demonstration of his cleverness is given as some citizens pass. The other beggars all fail to receive alms, but Agmar by his pitiful aspect and deep groans moves the passers-by to compassion. A scheme must be devised to retrieve their fallen fortunes. Oogno suggests that they enter the city as ambassadors from a far country, and Ulf seizes upon this with enthusiasm. Slag, however, says that they do not know his master, and that now they have suggested they go as ambassadors he will suggest that they go as kings. Agmar, who has been thinking, betters even this and says that they will go as gods. He tells of the seven green jade idols seated on the mountain of Marma a few days' ride from the city. Those gods are very potent here, and the beggars shall impersonate them. Agmar sends for a Thief, and tells him to fetch some green raiment, and he sends also for another beggar to make up the quota of seven. The green raiment comes, and Agmar distributes it among the seven, telling them to disguise themselves. The conclusion of this act is particularly fine, presenting as it does a splendid climax to the action, and a most enlightening bit of pure characterization.

ULF. We will each wear a piece of it over our rags.

OOGNO. Yes, yes, we shall look fine.

AGMAR. That is not the way that we shall disguise ourselves.

OOGNO. Not cover our rags?

AGMAR. NO, no. The first who looked closely would say, "These are only beggars. They have disguised themselves."

ULF. What shall we do?

AGMAR. Each of the seven shall wear a piece of the green raiment *underneath* his rags. And peradventure here and there a little shall show through; and men shall say, "These seven have disguised themselves as beggars. But we know not what they be!"

SLAG. Hear my wise master.

OOGNO. (*in admiration*) *He* is a beggar.

ULF. He is an *old* beggar.

It is Ulf who voices a fear that what they are to do may be regarded as an impious act, but Agmar quiets him. The curtain falls on the last speech given above.

Act two is in the Metropolitan Hall of the City of Kongros. The beggars are seated in a circle and the citizens are questioning them. Agmar with the aid of Slag succeeds in deceiving them into a half-hearted belief that the beggars are the gods. When doubt is raised Agmar so frightens the citizens that meats are brought as a sacrifice. All the beggars except Agmar eat hungrily. To the citizens they eat like hungry men, but when they see that Agmar abstains they wonder. Agmar says that he, the eldest of the gods, never eats, leaving that to the younger gods who have learned the bestial habit from the lions. And again he intimidates the citizens. Woldery wine is brought as a final test, and Agmar taking the bowl pours the wine on the ground. The citizens are amazed not so much by what the man does, but by his dignity and the manner of the doing. Through his very acting of the part, he is growing godlike. The citizens retire and Agmar eats, posting Slag at the door as sentinel. One comes running and demands the god who will not eat. The following scene, the concluding one of the act, is one of the most remarkable in dramatic literature.

ONE. Master, my child was bitten in the throat by a death-adder at noon. Spare him, master; he still breathes, but slowly.

AGMAR. IS he indeed your child?

ONE. He is surely my child, master.

AGMAR. Was it your wont to thwart him in his play, while he was well and strong?

ONE. I never thwarted him, master.

AGMAR. Whose child is Death?

ONE. Death is the child of the gods.

AGMAR. DO you that never thwarted your child in his play ask this of the gods?

ONE. (*with some horror*, *perceiving Agmar's meaning)* Master!

AGMAR. Weep not. For all the houses that men have builded are the play-fields of this child of the gods. —

(The Man goes away in silence, not weeping.)

OOGNO. (*taking Thahn by the wrist*) Is this indeed a man?

AGMAR. A man, a man, and until just now a hungry one.

Is not this scene beautifully builded? As Agmar talks he gradually assumes the aspect of a god, for his imagination reacts upon him until he seems to shake off his earthly guise. Then on the departure of the Man — or as it is usually played to give better effect, a Woman — he slowly recovers himself in his repetition of, "A man, a man..." bringing himself back to earth and to a realization of his position. Agmar is but a leader of beggars; he would have been a great prophet, a captain, and a leader of men but for one thing. He is wholly lacking in that spiritual quality which prompts Ulf to voice his fear that the gods will be angry at their impersonation. Agmar is a mental giant, an imaginative genius, but this great void in his nature is to undo him.

In the third act the beggars are seated on seven thrones rough hewn from rock set up in the same hall that they first entered. For the most part they reek with self-satisfaction. Mlan and Oogno, who represent the physical element, are in a voluptuous reverie over the wines they have drunk and meats they have eaten. They laugh at the people who come to worship them, sneering at their credulity. Agmar rebukes them, saying that when they were beggars they behaved as beggars, but now that they are gods they must behave as gods. Agmar by sheer imaginative power seems to deify himself above the others. The Thief who has been absent among his calling, but unknown to them, rushes in and cries that they are lost, that three days ago two dromedary men were sent to Marma to see whether the gods were still there. There is instant panic. Agmar fights for time, and tries to devise a plan. The citizens enter and announce the two Dromedary Men. Agmar warns them that their doubting will bring a heavy doom upon them and advises them to desist. They refuse, saying that their doubts are mighty. The Dromedary Men are ushered in, and are asked whether the seven gods are still seated in their thrones at Marma. They are not there! Their shrines are empty! The gods are indeed come from Marma! The citizens are reassured and retire to prepare a feast for the beggars whom they now believe to be the true gods beyond all question. The beggars are mad with joy. They are saved. Only Agmar wonders. Something has come to pass which was unforeseen by him. He saw the seven gods there at Marma as he passed by not long ago. He cannot understand. He represents the wholly mental element as Oogno and Mian represent the physical, and now something has happened that his intelligence cannot compass. Ulf tells of a dream he has had in which there was a fear. Ulf is the only one who is susceptible to

spiritual instincts; he may be said to be the prophet of the gods. Suddenly a frightened man runs in and throws himself down before them. He implores them not to walk at night around the city, and he describes how they appeared to him and to others — all green, and blind, and groping. The beggars cannot understand, but they begin to wonder. Agmar now feels his grasp on the situation slipping from him. He feels the presence of some force which is superior to him — and he fears. In spite of this he reassures the man and sends him away, but when the other beggars ask for explanations he cannot give them. There is the sound of a heavy, measured tread approaching. Can it be the dancing girls who walk so slowly and with such an ominous sound? Ulf springs to his feet and permits his fear to cry aloud — they have been impious and retribution will overtake them. His fears shall cry aloud and shall run before him like a dog out of the city. The great steps come nearer. Seven huge stone gods enter, and despite the efforts of the beggars to escape they are held by some mysterious power and are unable to resist.



Photo by White Studio. Courtesy of Portmanteau Theater

THE GODS OF THE MOUNTAIN

Agmar threatens the citizens with a doom

CITIZEN. They are cold; they have turned to stone.

(All abase themselves, foreheads to the floor.)

ONE. We have doubted them. We have doubted them. They have turned to stone because we have doubted them.

ANOTHER. They were the true gods.

ALL. They were the true gods. —

It is probable that there has never been a play more gigantic than this in conception. The fatality which Dunsany shares with the Greek dramas is here in its most perfect form. As Mr. Björkman remarks, "The crime of *hybris* which to the Greeks was the 'unforgivable sin' is here made as real to us as it was to them." Five of the beggars are purely physical, and they are shown as wholly subservient to the great intellect of Agmar; they themselves have nothing of the mind or spirit; they care for nothing but food, and wine, and dancing girls. Agmar is another Nietzsche; he is all brain, and his limitations are those of the fallible human intelligence. Ulf is a prophet of the spirit, but his mind is not strong enough to combat that of Agmar even though his instincts rebel against the projected imposition. But all through the play his forebodings warn us of the approaching peril. It is only when Agmar comes in contact with the spiritual essence, the divine force, that he is frustrated and ruined. Here is something which he did not consider and could not account for. That which is beyond and above the grasp of mere mind has crushed him with an ease and implacability which he could never foresee. Throughout the play I have pointed out how from time to time Agmar seemed to rise almost to divine heights, but it was never more than a "seeming." His divinity was a matter of imagination, and of cold logic; it never rose above the stratum of the mind. Hence when he is at the last confronted with that which he tried to imitate, his whole structure is shattered in an instant. The old saw that "you can fool a man with a stuffed dog, but you can't fool a dog" is very applicable to the relation between the citizens and the beggars. Humanity is fallible; only the gods are omnipotent.

By the foregoing it will be seen that I have read no little symbolism into "The Gods of the Mountain." It is not only permissible but even inevitable that this should be so, but still I feel called upon to defend my position in the face of Lord Dunsany's oft repeated statement that his plays have no

hidden meaning. A writer is often wholly unconscious of what lies beneath the surface of his work. He may tell a story and see nothing himself but the story, and yet that portion of him which is apart from his objective consciousness may have written heavily between the lines. It is here that one must step in to interpret, a dangerous task and full of pitfalls, striving to deduce from the more obvious import the underlying and subconscious motive. "The Gods of the Mountain" taken only as a tale fulfills its purpose splendidly, but it is quite fair to take it as more than that, provided only that in our effort to interpret we do not misconstrue. Several of Dunsany's plays are distinctly symbolic in character, but the symbolism is wholly unconscious, and therein differs from the deliberate symbolism of one such as Maeterlinck. With Dunsany the symbolism arises from the story; with Maeterlinck the story arises from the symbolism. It is simply a difference in point of view, but this difference is vital.

From a standpoint of dramatic technique the play is almost perfect. The plot is unified and well constructed, unfolding gradually and smoothly. The character development is masterly, rising to splendid dramatic heights. The climaxes are quite perfect in themselves, (the final scenes of acts two and three are strokes of pure genius) and every line advances the movement. It has been found that to some act two has too little definite action, and this may be explained by saying that here again we are confronted with the difficulty of providing an obvious opposition when one of the contending forces is an abstract element. The criticism is entirely captious, however, for in act two the character development is keen and vivid. Hence those who are disposed to criticise the play on these grounds, are as a rule those who would much prefer the old Drury Lane melodrama to the modern and more artistic play. If there is not always physical action in this play there is at least always plot and characterization, which is a much better thing.

There is just one error in "The Gods of the Mountain", and this is an error which is repeated in another of the Dunsany plays, namely, that of bringing the gods themselves on the stage. This is a matter of applied psychology, and of stage mechanics. One can imagine much more terrifying things than one can construct. When the gods are merely talked of, when they are only heard, and when their presence is but suggested, the imagination will conjure up a picture much nearer to that which the artist desires to convey than when we actually see the gods in person. It is impossible so to construct them as to present a really adequate sense of

illusion. Gigantic and grotesque as they are they will always fall far short of what they ought to be. This comes of trying directly to embody an abstract force. It cannot be done. It is like trying to bring Truth or Beauty before us; it is impossible. True we can symbolise Truth and Beauty, and just here we are provided with a point of escape. The gods can be symbolised. Very well, then, and how shall such symbols be manifested? When the Dunsany gods come on the stage the criticism is usually that though they are obviously not men they partake too greatly of the human element. The only way to avoid this is to make them more so; that is, to make them more like Man than men them selves. In the same way the Venus de Milo is more like Woman than the average female. They must not be something different because they cannot be made different enough; hence they must be simply the same, only more so! It is a question not of realization, but of idealization. In my opinion by far the better plan would be not to attempt to bring the gods on the stage at all. "The Glittering Gate" illustrates this perfectly. Then while everything would be done to suggest, nothing would be done to satisfy the suggestion, and the imagination would be left free to spin its own texture of immensity. Realization always falls short of expectation; nothing really is as terrible as we think it is going to be, and so it is by all odds best to rest content with the thought, sure that the embodiment would be no more than disillusioning. With this one exception "The Gods of the Mountain" is a practically flawless play. And be it noted in this connection that it is not the dramatist who is at fault in this, but the man of the theater, and Dunsany does not pretend to be that.

This play is the only one of Dunsany's which has had a failure in production, and that failure has since been notably retrieved. When William A. Brady brought the Haymarket production to Buffalo it failed. There were two reasons for this. First, the bill consisted of two plays of which "The Gods of the Mountain" was the second, and the bill was far too long. The audience did not leave the theater until almost midnight, and no play could be expected to succeed with such a handicap. Next, the production was very inadequately rehearsed, so inadequately in fact that the gods are said to have fallen over each other as they made their entrance. I simply desire to point out that Dunsany's one failure has been through no fault of his own.

If "The Gods of the Mountain" were a second "Hamlet" we should have the background sketched in for each of the characters, giving us a personal interest in their problems which is now somewhat lacking. Agmar's tragedy

would be almost unbearable if we had a deep personal interest in him. It is man in his relation to the gods and not to himself or to his neighbour which we are called upon to observe, and so the personal touch, the human element, is not there. There is something greater there, but it is not enough. If the two lesser requirements were fulfilled as the one greater is, the play would be perhaps one of the greatest in all dramatic literature. As it is, it is a masterpiece.

The plot advances to its conclusion with utter inevitability, punctuated by the forebodings of Ulf, who sniffs the approach of Nemesis as a trained dog flinches at the smell of death. It is impossible to praise the play too highly in this connection. The characterization is clean cut and vivid, the lack of background accounting for the fact that the outlines of the personalities are somewhat oversharp. They have to be in order that they may stand out properly. Dunsany has never surpassed in his dramatic writings the poetry of Ulfs wailing warning of their doom in the last act. Agmar too has in several places, notably the end of act two, wonderful magic lines, poignant and bitter sweet with beauty.

THE GOLDEN DOOM

The scene is outside the King's great door in Zericon, and the time is some while before the fall of Babylon. Two sentries guard the door and talk meanwhile of the heat and the cool of the near-by river. They talk also of the great King, and one of them feels a sense of menace as if some doom hung heavy. A star has fallen, and that may be a sign. A little boy and girl come in. The boy has come to pray to the great King for a hoop, but he cannot see the King so he prays to the King's door instead.

BOY. King's door, I want a little hoop.

The girl tells of a poem she has made and then proudly she recites it.

I saw a purple bird
Go up against the sky
And it went up, and up,
And round about did fly.

BOY. I saw it die.
GIRL. That doesn't scan.
BOY. Oh, that doesn't matter.

The King's Spies cross the stage, and the girl is frightened. The boy tells her that he will write her verses on the King's door, and at this she is greatly delighted. And so he writes the verses, appending the last line he added. The girl again protests, but the line is written.

The sentries have hardly noticed the children, but now they hear the King coming so that they drive the youngsters away. The King comes with his Chamberlain, and as he nears the door he sees the writing on it. He questions the sentries but they say that no one has been near the door; it does not occur to them to mention the children. The King fears that this writing may be a prophecy. The Prophets of the Stars are summoned and are commanded to interpret the prophecy of the writing on the King's door. They cannot do so, but each one silently covers himself with a great black cloak, for they believe the prophecy to be a doom. The Chief Prophet is summoned. He reads the writing and says that the King can be no other than the purple bird, for purple is royal; he has flown in the face of the gods and

they are angry. It is a doom. The King offers a sacrifice. He says that he has done his best for his people; that if he has neglected the gods it was only because he was concerned with the welfare of his subjects on earth. The King and the Chief Prophet discuss the most suitable sacrifice, and finally decide that the King's crown as a symbol of his pride shall be offered. The King asks only that he may rule among his people uncrowned, and minister to their welfare. So the crown is laid on the sacrificial block before the King's door, and as the night comes on and it grows dark so that the stars may be seen, everyone goes away.

BOY. (*enters from the right, dressed in white, his hands out a little, crying)* King's door, King's door, I want my little hoop.(*He goes up to the King's door. When he sees the King's crown there he utters a satisfied)* O-oh! (*He takes it up, puts it on the ground, and, beating it before him with the sceptre, goes out by the way that he entered.)*

(The great door opens; there is light within; a furtive Spy slips out and sees that the crown is gone. Another Spy slips out. Their crouching heads come close together.)

FIRST SPY. (*hoarse whisper)* The gods have come!

(They run back through the door and the door is closed. It opens again and the King and the Chamberlain come through.)

KING. The stars are satisfied.

So the play ends, on the high note, the major chord always.



Photo by J. M. Cummings. Courtesy of Portmanteau Theater

THE GOLDEN DOOM

The Chief Prophet interprets the writing on the door

The play like others of Dunsany's represents the expression of an abstract idea, and that idea not a particularly dramatic one. Again we have the cosmic, the godlike viewpoint, detached, impersonal and vast. A King's crown and a child's hoop are weighed against each other in the scale, and are found to be of equal importance in the scheme of things. We learn that it is not always the great things, but sometimes the smallest things that overthrow whole kingdoms, that prophets are by no means infallible, and that the gods may speak to us through the mouth of a child.

The "Golden Doom" is well constructed. It builds from the very outset to a triumphant conclusion. But it lacks opposition, conflict. Man is neither opposed to man nor even to the gods. A sacrifice is made; will does not assert itself but bows to the inevitable. As a study of a situation, as the exposition of an idea the play is in its way a masterpiece, but the fact that the forces which are suggested in the action are not contending thins the

piece from a purely dramatic standpoint. It is the poet rather than the dramatist who speaks in "The Golden Doom." It may be observed too that it is no personal problem with which we are confronted; it rarely is with Dunsany. We do not feel, nor is it desired that we should feel, a sense of personal sympathy for the Boy praying for his little hoop, or for the King laying his crown on the sacrificial block. It is Boyhood in the mass, nay, even in the abstract with which we are called upon to sympathise; it is the idea of Majesty which we are asked to pity. It is Man in the conglomerate whole with which we are dealing; not an individual man. It is necessary that this should be well understood, for it is one of the basic principles of Dunsany's work, and it is summed up when I repeat that he is more interested in ideas than he is in people. It is never an isolated individual problem which he attacks; it is rather some one question which is peculiar to humanity as a whole.

It is interesting to observe that while Dunsany does not provide conflict in this play he does provide the next thing to it, contrast, and that in a most effective manner. The whole episode of the children played against the background of royalty with its spies and its prophets is immensely ironic. The point of view of the child, too, with its perfect and wholly unconscious logic, becomes delicious when placed in juxtaposition to the complex outlook man has built for himself. To understand this play is to understand Dunsany. Invariably he is a scoffer at the subtleties of adult philosophy, and a strong adherent of the clear, unsophisticated point of view of the child. He reduces sophistication to its basic premise of sophistry times without number, only to rise and to attack once more from another direction.

Dramatic technique is largely a matter of dramatic instinct, mixed with a goodly portion of common sense. Dunsany does not pretend to be a technician, but observe how carefully, and yet how easily, we are shown that the King's great door is sacred and must not be touched. A stranger from Thessaly enters at the very beginning of the action and approaches the door. The sentinels warn him off with their spears, and after a moment he wanders away again, having provided the necessary exposition in the most natural manner possible. The atmosphere is heightened, and we hardly realize that we have learned anything of importance. See too how the note of menace is struck at the very outset by one of the sentries who feels a doom and a foreboding. It is not unduly emphasized, but it is there and we at once feel the force of its suggested terror. From then on we wait, sure that

a crisis of some kind is at hand. As I said, the play ends on a major chord, but it does even more than this; it ends at the very moment when it should end, neither too soon nor a moment overtime. This point is true of Dunsany's plays; they begin at the one inevitable moment when they should begin, and they end in a like manner. This is not only true of the plays as a whole, but it is true of every separate scene, and of every speech in the scenes. They are all timed to the minute. The dialogue of Dunsany has been compared with that of Maeterlinck, but the comparison is superficial. Maeterlinck's dialogue is often so vague as to be practically imbecilic in effect, while the dialogue of Dunsany is always terse and to the point; not one word is wasted, there is never a shadow of doubt as to the exact meaning, and every speech carries the action definitely forward. With Maeterlinck too all the characters speak in the style of Maeterlinck, whether they be prince or peasant; there is no attempt to give them a colloquial value. It is here that Dunsany most clearly shows that with his marvelous imagination he has combined the most acute power of observation. His characters are as real as any to be found next door or on the high-road. It is only the situations which are grotesque, and this very combination of the real and the unreal makes for dramatic effect in a manner of which Maeterlinck for all his genius could not dream. Dunsany has observed and noted, and the results of that observation are as true to life as any preachment of Ibsen's; with Dunsany it is only his terminology that is strange.

For sheer beauty of thought and of expression "The Golden Doom" ranks high among Dunsany's works. It is full of wonderful color, and of that magic atmosphere of which only Dunsany is master. It has a story to tell, and that story is one of the great ones of the world, albeit that the theme is perhaps more suited to the poem than to the play. That is the only flaw in an otherwise faultless bit of work, that the poet has for a moment driven the dramatist to a secondary position. But the work was well worth doing, and who but Lord Dunsany could have written "The Golden Doom"?

THE LOST SILK HAT

This is one of Lord Dunsany's two experiments with a "realistic" background. By realistic I mean here that the action of the piece is set in "a fashionable London Street", and that the characters are such persons as one might expect to meet in such a locality. The acceptance of these self imposed conditions has not, however, restrained Dunsany, in the very least degree, from indulging his fancy, and the result is one of the most amusing light comedies imaginable. There will doubtless be some who will insist on the term farce being used in this connection, but by farce is meant a play where the plot dominates the characterization, and by comedy is intended exactly the reverse. In this play again we find an entire lack of personal background for the characters; they have individuality rather than personality; we are dealing with broad types used for the exposition of certain ideas, but these ideas are exposed through characterization rather than through plot. Hence, if it is necessary to classify the play at all it seems quite reasonable that it should be dignified by the term of comedy. If it were a longer play, and if the background were painted in, it is entirely possible that we should have been treated to the only perfect comedy of manners since "The Importance of Being Earnest." The outline is all there, ready and waiting.

The Caller stands on the door-step of a house, "faultlessly dressed", but without a hat. He has just proposed to the lady in the house and has been rejected, and in the mad desperation of the moment has fled leaving his hat behind him. His predicament is no slight one. To return for the hat, while a sensible measure, would be an inconceivable anti-climax, and he cannot be ridiculous. Not to have the hat is an equally impossible situation. He cannot go through the streets of London half clothed! A Laborer comes along and the Caller accosts him in the hope that he can be persuaded to recover the hat. He tries to induce the Laborer to come to his aid, he tries even to bribe him, but he only succeeds in arousing the suspicions of that horny handed person to the effect that there is something very mysterious about the whole affair. The dialogue between the two is outrageously funny.

LABORER. YOU aren't going to give me a sovereign, and rise it to two sovereigns, for an *empty* hat?

CALLER. But I must have my hat. I can't be seen in the streets like this. There's nothing *in* the hat. What do you think's in the hat?

LABORER. Ah, I'm not clever enough to say that, but it looks as if the papers was in that hat.

CALLER. The papers?

LABORER. Yes, papers proving, if you can get them, that you're the heir to that big house, and some poor innocent will be defrauded.

And so it goes until the Laborer makes his departure, sure that a crime is on the verge of commission. A Clerk enters and he is approached in the same way, and with the same result. He too is suspicious, but his imagination is not capable of the flights of that of the Laborer. It is rather his sense of propriety that is violated; the situation is unconventional, and therefore improper. He goes away, and the Caller is left alone. Enter the Poet, who having the whole ghastly mishap explained to him is disposed to be indulgent. He philosophises at length upon hats and upon proposals and at length advises the Caller to buy a bayonet, and join the Bosnians. There, having given up his life for a hopeless cause, he will become immortal. The Caller is furious, and at last decides to go in and get the hat himself, whatever the cost. The Poet pleads with him not to go, for if he does there will be a reconciliation and Romance will be unsatisfied; the Caller will marry the lady, and will have a large family of ugly children. Could anything be more horrible to contemplate? Nevertheless in the Caller goes, and the Poet sits disconsolate on the door-step.

POET, (*rising, lifting hand*)... but let there be graven in brass upon this house: Romance was born again here out of due time and died young. (*He sits down. Enter Laborer and Clerk with Policeman. The music stops.)*

POLICEMAN. Anything wrong here?

POET. Everything's wrong. They're going to kill Romance.

POLICEMAN, (*to Laborer*) This gentleman doesn't seem quite right somehow.

LABORER. They're none of them quite right today.

(Music starts again.)

POET. My God! It is a duet.

POLICEMAN. He seems a bit wrong somehow.

LABORER. YOU should 'a' seen the other one.

Curtain.

This is surely a most excruciatingly funny play. The Laborer is one of the best comedy characters I have seen in a long, long while. And just here let me digress sufficiently to remark that, quite unconsciously, I believe, Lord Dunsany has in the Caller and in the Poet drawn two delicious pictures of George Moore and Yeats — both caricatured broadly to be sure, but both recognisable. It may be that it is simply some perverse imp of the grotesque that makes me see a caricature where there is none intended, but the thought has amused me, and so I pass it on in the hope that its humour may not be entirely exhausted.

"The Lost Silk Hat" is not particularly dramatic, even for a comedy; nothing happens. Its carrying power exists almost entirely in the dialogue. But such dialogue! It is not witty, for wit is cold, a Shavian quality, intended not to expose a character, but to make a point, while humour is exactly otherwise. The French are, as a nation, witty; the English are humorous. The deep suspicion, the frank incredulity of the Laborer; the strong common sense of the Caller; the rigid conventionality of the Clerk; and the pure romance of the Poet are all as clean cut as possible. There is not a single waste word. It is one of the most delicious bits of pure humour that I have ever seen.

Technically, a hard word to use surely in this connection, the piece is well done. The action, such as it is, is rapid, each scene blending easily and swiftly into the next. The necessary exposition is given in a few words which serve not only to elucidate the previous happenings, but also to develop the present situation. This is quite as it should be, but how rarely do we find it! One becomes so used to machine-made drama, that the natural flow of Dunsany is like an echo from another age.

Having pointed out that Dunsany always ends his plays at just the proper moment, I shall now have to qualify the statement by remarking that the conclusion of this particular play would be stronger if the last two speeches were omitted. Whether this is the exception that proves the rule or not, I do not know, but there can be no doubt but that it is an exception.

Apropos of Dunsany's constant irony there is a slight point which may be worthy of attention; namely, that it is the satirist who is witty, and the humorist who is ironic. Dunsany certainly comes within the last named category. He is a humorist, even a great humorist, and the final test is that in their very humour his plays border on tragedy. Humour may be turned to tragedy; satire never can be. The chief point of difference between Dunsany

and most humorists is that while their outlook is personal his is cosmic. Man regarded in the mass becomes a gigantic joke, his pretence that he is civilised, his assumption of entire free will, and all his foibles of sophistication are entirely comic. It is only when he is regarded individually that he is tragic, and that which makes him so is the very same element that made him comic before. When one thinks of the present war as a whole it is immensely ironic, but when one stops to consider the individual personal problems involved the great irony breaks into an endless series of minor tragedies — minor, that is, in their relation to the whole. Dunsany's outlook is as nearly universal, and hence as nearly detached and impersonal, as may be; he never reaches the personal, he never tries to reach it.

That is at once the cause of his greatness, and the reason why he is not greater.

"The Lost Silk Hat" is no more than a trifle, a spark flecked off the emery wheel of the imagination of the artist, but it is so perfect a trifle, and so brilliant a spark, that a more or less serious consideration of its merits is by no means out of place. The small thing beautifully done is of inestimably greater value than the great thing botched in the making. And perchance in this play we may find a promise of that perfect comedy of manners which Dunsany may one day write. Certain it is at any rate that no one is less interested in such a possibility than Dunsany himself, and for that we can be thankful. He has one receipt for writing a play — when you have a story to tell, tell it — and so long as he adheres to this dogma we can at least be sure that whatever the result may be we shall never lose interest.

A NIGHT AT AN INN

Dunsany says of this play that comparing it to "The Gods of the Mountain" is like comparing a man to his own shadow. That sums up the case very well. "A Night at an Inn" is indeed a shadow, an echo of the greater work.

The curtain rises on a room in an old English Inn. The Toff, a dilapidated gentleman, is there with his three sailor followers. We learn from the ensuing conversation between the three (the Toff does not enter into the discussion) that a short time ago the party raided an Indian temple, and robbed the idol of its single eye, a huge ruby. Their two companions were killed before they left the country, and even now the three priests of Klesh, the idol, are following after the fugitives in order to visit retribution upon them and regain their own. Albert tells how he gave the priests the slip in Hull. The Toff has brought them here to the old Inn which he has hired for a period of time. The sailors are restless; they see no more danger and desire to be off with their booty. When they tell this to the Toff he bids them take the ruby and go. They do so, but the next moment are back through the door. They have seen the Priests of Klesh who have followed all the way from Hull — eighty miles on foot. The Toff has expected this, and has acted in consequence. He tells them that they must kill the priests if they ever expect to enjoy the ruby in peace. Through his cleverness the priests are trapped one after the other, and are murdered. The four then celebrate their victory, but one goes out for a pail of water and comes back pale and shaking, disclaiming any part in the ruby. Klesh himself enters, blind and groping. He takes the ruby eye and placing it in his forehead goes out. Then a voice is heard calling one of the seamen. He does not want to go but is impelled by some mysterious force. He goes out, a single moan is heard, and it is over. The next seaman is called, and then the third. Last of all the Toff hears the command and makes his final exit.



Photo by Byron Co., N. Y. Courtesy of Neighborhood Playhouse

A NIGHT AT AN INN

The Toff deceives the Priest into thinking he is dead

ALBERT(*going).* Toffy, Toffy.(*Exit.)*

VOICE. Meestaire Jacob Smith, Able Seaman.

SNIGGERS. I can't go, Toffy. I can't go. I can't do it. (*He goes.)*

VOICE. Meestaire Arnold Everett Scott-Fortescue, late Esquire, Able Seaman.

THE TOFF. I did not foresee it. (*Exit.)*

Curtain.

He did not foresee it, just as Agmar did not foresee the result of his impiety. Herein the two plays are close together, but "The Gods of the Mountain" is immeasurably superior both in conception, and in the handling of its theme. It has poetry, and characterization, whereas the second play is pure melodrama. And certainly it is one of the best melodramas ever written. The one error made in the entrance of the gods in the first play has been repeated here, and with just as detrimental an effect. The same arguments which we considered then apply now and with equal force. It cannot be done. The illusion is destroyed immediately. This is the

only error to be found in either play, and it may be said again that it is an error not of the drama, but of the theater.

The construction of "A Night at an Inn" is really magnificent. Gradually it gathers force until it is in the full swing of tremendous action, and having reached the climax it pauses a single instant, and then with a marvelously quick reversal, it pitches down to the end. The "cloud no bigger than a man's hand" is seen; it rapidly spreads over the whole situation, until finally it is dispelled to all appearances, but at the very moment of its disappearance it returns only to envelop the whole action. The play is extraordinary in its quick movement, its utter surety of purpose, and in the peripetia which gives it the power of its final blow. That is one of the most astonishing things about all these plays; they show a skill, and not only a facility, but a power of handling, which one is much more likely to ascribe to an old hand than to a man who does not make dramaturgy his sole business in life. Dunsany always knows exactly what he wants to do, and exactly how to do it. Under the circumstances this is surely rather astounding. There are more necessary mechanics connected with the drama than with any other form of the literary art. Neither the poem nor the novel has so rigid a structure (the short story may have), and it is therefore surprising to find so complete a control over a medium to which one has not devoted much time and energy. But this is implying that Lord Dunsany has written no other plays than those we know, and this indeed may be the case. We speak of a man's first play, not taking into consideration the many plays he may have written and consigned to the waste-basket. It is often those plays which make a man a writer, just as it is the "scrub" team that makes the varsity what it is. But all evidence goes to prove that Dunsany's first play was "The Glittering Gate", written for Yeats, and followed by "King Argimenes and the Unknown Warrior." Both these plays show the hand of the tyro in places, but they both indicate a grasp of form that is amazing. I fear that my use of the word "form" may be antagonistic to those restless spirits who chatter so easily of "freeing the drama from the shackles of dogma." I have a strong inward conviction, however, that when they have rid themselves satisfactorily of the shackles, they will find that somewhere in the scuffle they have lost the drama. However — !

In their sudden reverse twist at the end, Dunsany's plays remind one of O. Henry's short stories. With both writers too the same sense of economy is evident. Not a word could be subtracted from "A Night at an Inn" without

its loss being felt. Sometimes this is carried almost to an extreme. Dunsany's imagination outruns his pen on occasion, and there is a paucity of stage "business" in his manuscripts that has made at least one producer gasp. In the plays one sometimes feels that while all the high lights are present there is a lack of shadowing, of detailed line work which, while not vital, is at least desirable. The plays are never in the least slovenly in workmanship, quite otherwise in fact, but there is present a sense that not enough time has been spent on them to give us all that the author has imagined. This doubtless arises from the fact that Dunsany concerns himself with nothing beyond the story itself. He is not interested in the lights and shadows of a more subtle characterization, and this is without doubt a serious weakness. But it is only in the acceptance of a work of art for what it is, without regrets for what it might have been, that we can arrive at any conclusion.

The resemblance of "A Night at an Inn" to "The Gods of the Mountain" is particularly interesting as showing how effectively the same theme can be treated in separate ways. The Toff parallels Agmar, the sailors are of the same ilk as the beggars, and the gods are always the same. The same philosophy is present in both plays, but the sublime audacity of the first raises it to heights of which the other is not capable. Moreover we are interested in Agmar as a personal problem, while in the Toff we never feel such interest. The beggars are individualized; the sailors are treated collectively. All this marks the difference between the two plays especially in that one is drama, and the other is melodrama in which the plot motivates the action, as opposed to drama in which the action is motivated by character. "*A* Night at an Inn" will always remain one of Dunsany's most effective plays because it is so perfect of its kind, although that kind may not be of the highest type. Certainly it shows that Dunsany can provide plenty of action when action is called for. It is vital to the effect of the play that the action be extremely brief after the entrance of Klesh, yet there are still certain definite things to be accomplished. Without conveying a sense of undue hurry, with only such speed as is necessary to keep the pitch, the play is brought to its logical conclusion. There can be no question that, with the exception of the bringing of Klesh on the stage, the play stands the acid test in every particular. It is a thrilling bit of work; a *tour de force* which is reminiscent of the Grand Guignol, but which is wholly lacking in the morbidity that is so characteristic of that Chamber of Horrors.

The idea of dramatic contrast is very interestingly carried out in this play. To take a minor instance, observe how the quiet calm, the detached disinterestedness of the Toff stands out against the sailors with their quicker, easier emotions. In Agmar, and in the Toff, one fancies that the author is unconsciously drawing a picture of himself as he would be with the poet absent. There is a certain vague similarity in the mental attitudes of the three. To return to the contrast; it was surely a daring thing to set so grotesque a conception in so commonplace a background, an old English Inn. One would think that gods and half clothed priests would enter here only to be laughed at. It would seem to be like playing "Macbeth" in evening clothes. It is through sheer skill that the result actually achieved is quite otherwise. From the rise of the curtain the atmosphere is so definite and so tense that there is no possible thought of incongruity. One never has to "get into" the atmosphere of a Dunsany play. The atmosphere reaches out and holds you even against your will. This is due partly to the fact that Dunsany himself is convinced, and that therefore he is enabled to be convincing. He believes so thoroughly in his own creations, at least while he is working on them, that the audience cannot but feel the force of his belief. More than this it is skill in writing, and, mark you, it is the skill of the poet rather than that of the dramatist. A playwright is able to create an atmosphere of this description only when he is a poet also. The ability of Dunsany to do this and to do it well is one of his strongest assets, and "A Night at an Inn" is a perfect example of this phase.

THE QUEEN'S ENEMIES

The place of this play is in the great room of an underground temple situated on the bank of the Nile; the time is that of an early dynasty. The stage is divided into two sections. On the right one may see a steep flight of stone steps leading down to a door which opens into the room itself. The stage is dark. Two slaves come down the steps with torches. They have been ordered to prepare the room for the Queen, who is about to feast there with her enemies.



Photo by P. O. Valentine. Courtesy of Neighborhood Playhouse

THE QUEEN'S ENEMIES

The Queen welcomes her guests

They look about the room of the old disused temple and comment upon the strange eccentricity of their mistress. A great table is set in the center and at one end of it has been placed a throne. From the shadow of the throne moves a huge figure, much to the terror of the slaves. It is Harlee, a servant of the Queen. He is dumb, his tongue having been pulled out by the roots. He laughs at the two, and moves to one side. The slaves go, and the Queen with her attendant comes down the long flight of steps into the room. The Queen is young, and slender, and pretty. She bemoans the fact that she has enemies. Her Captains have taken their lands but she knows naught of it. She is plaintive, beseeching, almost querulous as she asks, "Oh, why have I enemies?" Now she has planned this feast of reconciliation. But she is afraid to be there alone with her enemies. She is so small and young; they may kill her. After many doubts and complainings; after much fear and trembling she decided to go through with it. At the top of the steps leading to the closed door appear two of the invited Princes. One of them is distrustful and does not want to go further. He fears a trap. Finally he induces his fellow to turn back, but as they are about to do so the others arrive and there is nothing to do but to enter. The Princes, a King, and the High-Priest come with their slaves. The Queen greets them timidly. They stand about the room uncertain whether to trust her or not. The old dumb slave of the Queen is at her side, and she murmurs to him, "To your post, Harlee." He goes, though one of the Princes stops him and inquires his mission — but he is dumb. The Queen finally manages to persuade her guests to sit at the feasting board. They fear to eat, and the Queen weeps that they should so distrust her. Moved by her tears they eat. She offers a toast to the future. As they are about to drink it the High-Priest says that a voice has just come to him speaking in his ear telling him not to drink to the future. His fears are laughed at and the toast is drunk. Then the company becomes merry, and jest and story fly across the board. The Queen joins in at first, but when she sees that her guests are occupied she slips from her throne and with her attendant tries to leave the room. She is stopped at once, for they are distrustful of her still. But she has promised to restore to them the lands she has taken, and they cannot believe that she would harm them. By her generosity she has made them all her friends. The Queen says that she must go to pray to a very secret god, and so she is permitted to depart. She goes out and part way up the steps, while the great door closes fast behind her. The guests try the door when she has gone. It is locked. They

fear once more a trap. Slaves are posted at the door with weapons and they all wait in silence for what may come. The Queen above them, unseen and unheard by them, on the steps lifts her voice and prays to old Father Nile. She tells him that she has a sacrifice worthy of him — Princes, a King, and a Priest. She asks that he come and take them from her. She pauses, but there comes no answer. Then she calls swiftly, "Harlee, Harlee, let in the water!" There is another deathly pause. Then, as the lights darken, from an opening in the room below, the water from the Nile pours in, and amid cries and shrieks, the enemies of the Queen are drowned. The water rises up the steps from underneath the door; as it reaches the Queen she lifts her *gar*ment out of its way and then, mounting a step higher, she murmurs voluptuously, "Oh, I shall sleep to-night!" She slowly climbs the steps with her attendant and vanishes.

In the character of the Queen we are confronted with a problem which the play itself does little to solve. Is her act simply a cold blooded deliberate murder, or was it a sudden impulse? Throughout the play she maintains an attitude of injured virtue, and of entire innocence. This pose on her part is stressed until it is unmistakable. Is this hypocrisy or is it natural? If it is natural she could never have done what she did. The two things are wholly incongruous; if she is one she cannot seemingly be the other. One cannot be a sweet and innocent girl and a Lady Macbeth at the same time. On the other hand, if this attitude is merely a pose, why is this not made evident? To keep such a matter from the audience is fatal. There are any number of times when the Queen could have thrown off the mask, but she never did so. The result of all this has been to make the character of this royal lady extremely obscure. We all agree that it is a most interesting play, but what is the mystery of the Queen? She is not consistent; nor is she even consistently inconsistent. The fact that she told Harlee early in the action to go to his post, and then later called to him to let in the water surely indicates beyond question that the murder was most carefully planned and arranged for. The very fact of the feasting place, underground and on the bank of the Nile, suggests this also. But the character of the Queen as it is shown us does not suggest it in the slightest degree, and the sign-posts which I have just mentioned are too slight to afford adequate warning. Hence the Dunsanyesque surprise at the end of the play comes with an unexpected shock; the characterization so carefully built up is shattered in an instant, and we are left to gasp in amazement at what seems an utter incongruity.

Surprise calls for careful preparation, and here there is little or none of it. In both "The Gods of the Mountain" and "A Night at an Inn" the sense of menace and foreboding is gradually built up until the event of which it gave warning has transpired. But in "The Queen's Enemies" we are shown a woman who is one thing and who does another without warning or explanation. Our sense of the fitness of things is violated. It is bad dramaturgy somewhere.

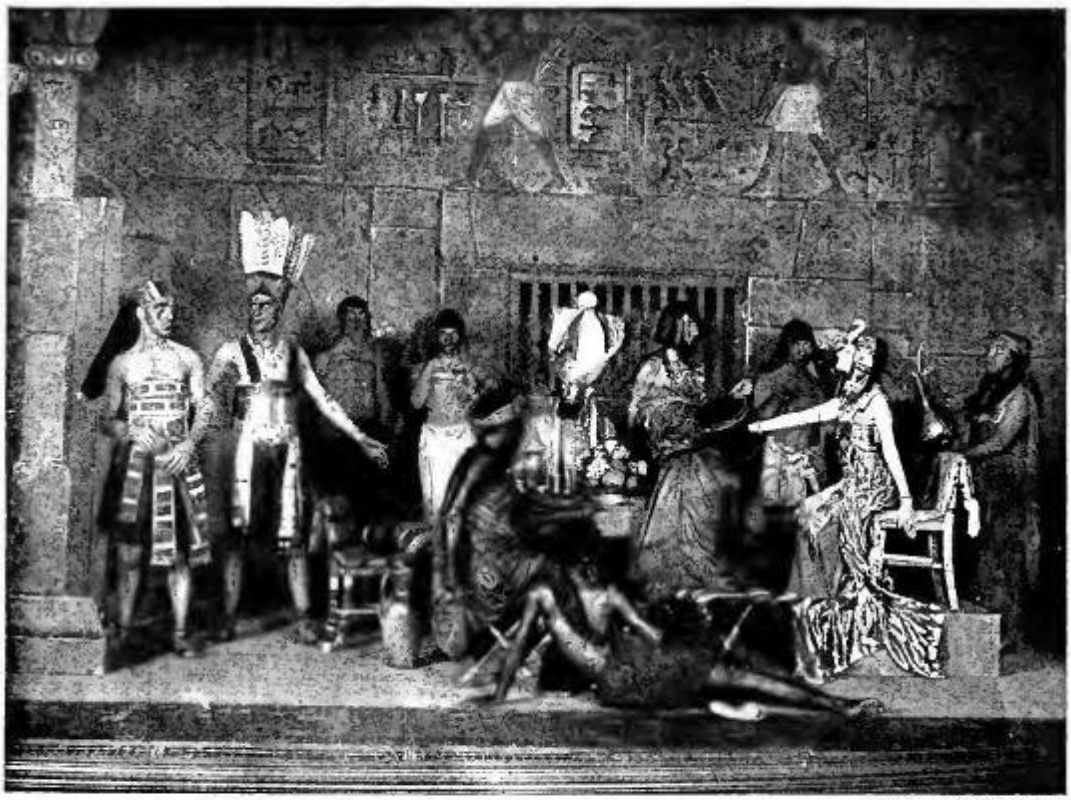


Photo by P. O. Valentine

THE QUEEN'S ENEMIES
The Queen reassures her guests

It so happens that Lord Dunsany has himself furnished the key to the problem, and before discussing the play further I will submit his own explanation. The Queen is wholly unconscious of any wrong doing. She is an aesthete; anything ugly either in itself or in its effect upon her is to her a

distinct immorality, something to be obliterated from the face of the earth, to suffer nothing but annihilation. Being this she is of course sublimely selfish. She is selfish too in the absolute, not the relative sense. If a dirty child brushed against her she would kill that child. And yet she is of the most delicate sensibility; these things hurt her, and she blots them out of existence not because she feels a satisfaction in the act — there is no sense of vengeance, or of malice — but because she believes it to be a divine duty to rid the earth of that which she deems a painful disfigurement. So when she prays to Father Nile to send the water she fully believes that in offering this sacrifice she is performing a holy task — albeit a most unpleasant one. But, being a woman, she does not rely too greatly on Father Nile, and has placed Harlee at the flood-gates, so that if the deity does not respond the sacrifice will still be accomplished. And afterward, when the water rises from the flooded room up the steps to the hem of her garment, knowing that those who were a menace to her, who haunted her bedside, driving slumber into the shadows, and who were to her the very apotheosis of all that is evil because they balked her will, were gone for ever, she revels in that which she has done, knowing that her offering to the gods will bring to her the rest and peace she desires. She is an æsthete wholly without a moral sense; which is to say, only a sensualist.

If this were all brought out in the play it would be very well, but it is not so brought out. Lord Dunsany has attempted a characterization which was beyond him considering his lack of entire acquaintance with his medium. I have pointed out several times before that he did not as a rule furnish that background so necessary to vitalize a character into a living personality, but never before has there been the same need for so doing. Now such a background is imperative, and the fact that it is not there has frustrated his design. The play is intended to be an immensely subtle characterization. Dunsany's tendency to show only the high spots has reduced the subtlety to intelligibility in this instance. It was vital that the background should be filled in. The play is interesting, and has been successful because of its atmosphere, and of its action. But the motivating force of this action is entirely obscure. The play is like a book in which one sees only the chapter headings and the illustrations.

For several reasons I am inclined to suspect that Dunsany intended in this play to convey the idea that the Queen was in reality not at all different from the ordinary woman, indeed that she typified in this phase of her

character Woman in the generic sense. The moral would be in that case that women are utterly ruthless in their pursuit of whatever they desire, and that anything which stands in the way of such a pursuit is to them merely an evil to be extinguished. This attitude on the part of Lord Dunsany toward woman in general I shall take up more in detail a little later, as it applies to several of the plays. As Miss Prism remarked to Dr. Chasuble in "The Importance of Being Earnest", "A misanthrope I can understand — a womanthrope, never!" I think it is perfectly safe to acquit Lord Dunsany of being a "womanthrope"!

It has been suggested several times that the play would have been vastly improved if it had been a short story; that the drama was not the medium for this theme. To a certain extent this theory is tenable. The story writer can fill in a mass of detailed characterization in description which the dramatist must express in terms of action, a much more difficult task. Hence there are undoubtedly some themes which the playwright would do well to leave to his fellow craftsman. I do not believe, however, that this is one of them. I see no reason why the story of this unconsciously cruel Queen, for all her subtlety, should not be told in dramatic form. The best solution would probably be to give the play another act, making the present act the second. In act one all necessary background could be given quite easily and dramatically through some incident or episode which would suggest in itself all that has been omitted in the present version.

"The Queen's Enemies" is one of Lord Dunsany's poorest plays. And though this be true it has been successful and deservedly so. It tells an interesting story in a most dramatic manner; it has atmosphere and colour, and it shows amusingly how much better Dunsany is at his worst than many others at their best. I class the play as I do because it fails of the purpose for which it was intended. It set out to show something, and it failed to show it, and in the failing it obscured the action. The salient point of the play, its real *raison d'etre,* is the underlying motive which prompts the action, and this motive is so vague as to be incoherent. That which remains, the action itself, saves the piece, but it is not enough to turn the play into that which it would have been had the whole motivation been apparent. That such motivation was intended is very evident, and that the intention was not carried out is equally so.

As for the poetry of the play, that lies hidden for the most part with that portion which has never seen the light. It is not there; the most that we can

say is that if the play had been written as it was intended, it would have been.

I may seem to have devoted an over-amount of space to the faults of "The Queen's Enemies", and to have been even captious in my criticism of it. The play which has few or no flaws, and is able to stand upon its own feet, naturally requires less attention than that play of which the reverse is true. If a thing is good, and if we like it, we do not have to have it explained to us. But to understand an evil is to forgive it — which applies here, bad paraphrase though it is.

THE TENTS OF THE ARABS

As we are dealing with the plays in chronological order it should be mentioned that it is the first professional production in America of "The Tents of the Arabs" in November of 1916 which suggests the inclusion of the play at this particular point. It was published in magazine form some two years before it was produced.

The scene is outside the gate of the city of Thalanna, and the time is uncertain. BelNarb and Aoob, two camel drivers, sit at the gates and look down upon the city. They talk of cities and of the desert, of the splendour of the one and of the dreary waste of the other. For long they talk, wishing that their lot were cast among the crowded places, and that they did not have to venture their lives among the sand storms. They are on their way to Mecca, and the voices of their fellow pilgrims are heard calling them to come. They go, and hard upon their departure the young King enters, followed shortly by his Chamberlain. The King is very bored with the council chamber, and the court; he is tired of the walls that hem him in, and weary with the heavy responsibilities which have been forced upon him. They have sent for a Princess to marry him, and this is not because of love, but for the good of the State only, and the King is sad. He longs for the desert, for the great quiet, and rest, and for the tents of the Arabs. He has known cities too long and he is weary. He says he will go to the desert for a year, and though the Chamberlain does his best to restrain him he is decided. The Chamberlain conspires to have his escort bring him back very soon, for when the King is gone there are no favours to be given. But the King slips away alone, and mounting a camel is soon lost among the sand hills.



Photo by Frank Scott Clark. Courtesy Arts and Crafts Theater

THE TENTS OF THE ARABS

Bel-Narb and Aoob before the gates of the city

The second act shows us the same place after the passing of just one year. The King sits on the sand and by him sits the gypsy girl of the desert, Eznarza, whom he loves. She knows who he is and that he must leave her, and they talk there sadly of their parting.

KING. NOW I have known the desert and dwelt in the tents of the Arabs.

EZNARZA. There is no land like the desert and like the Arabs no people.

KING. It is all over and done, I return to the walls of my fathers.

EZNARZA. Time cannot put it away, I go back to the desert that nursed me.

KING. Did you think in those days on the sands, or among the tents in the morning, that my year would ever end, and I be brought away by strength of my word to the prisoning of my palace?

The King tries to persuade Eznarza to come with him, and to live with him in his palace, but she will not, for a gypsy cannot live in the great walled city. She tells him that he must go back and marry his Princess. And then she asks him to come with her, to forget Thalanna, to return and dwell with her among the tents of her fathers. But this he cannot do, for he has given his word that he will return, and the city must have a King. The Chamberlain and his follower come in; they are expecting the King. They do not notice the two on the sand. Bel-Narb and Aoob enter, for they have returned from their pilgrimage. The Chamberlain speaks to the noble who accompanies him, and as it is past the time they feel sure that the King has died within the year and will never return to them. They cover their heads with dust. Bel-Narb, who has been listening to this, suddenly goes up to the Chamberlain and says that he has returned, that he is the King. The Chamberlain doubts, surely he has changed most greatly in the year, but surely also the desert changes men. The King has started to his feet, but he does not interfere. As the Chamberlain hesitates, the King, half covering his face with his cloak as an Arab, says that he has seen Bel-Narb in Mecca and has there known him for the King. This confirmation is all that is needed. At once Bel-Narb is recognized by Chamberlain and noble alike. Aoob joins his voice to the chorus of recognition. The King on being questioned says that he is but a poor camel driver, and when they wish him to go to the temple to be rewarded he refuses, for he must return to the desert. The King and Eznarza are once more left alone. The people of the city are only fools, and now they have a foolish King. The rightful King and the gypsy will return to the tents of the Arabs.

EZNARZA. We shall hear the sand again, whispering low to the dawn wind.

KING. We shall hear the nomads stirring in their camps far off because it is dawn.

EZNARZA. The jackals will patter past us, slipping back to the hills.

KING. When at evening the sun is set we shall weep for no day that is gone.

EZNARZA. I will raise up my head of a night time against the sky, and the old, old unbought stars shall twinkle through my hair, and we shall not envy any of the diademed queens of the world.

Curtain.

It is a beautiful story; one almost hesitates to call it a play, although it is one. But in it the poet has spoken more loudly than the playwright. In the first extract I quoted you will notice how perfect the hexameter lines are through the first four speeches and the first part of the next. The following also is really very lovely in its delicate and subtle beauty.

KING. Who is this little child that is mightier than Time? Is it Love that is mightier?

EZNARZA. NO, not Love.

KING. If he conquer even Love, then none is mightier.

EZNARZA. He scares Love away with weak, white hairs and with wrinkles. Poor little Love. Poor Love, Time scares him away.

KING. What is this child of man that can conquer Time and that is braver than Love?

EZNARZA. Even Memory.

And a little later Eznarza says again that "We have only that little child of man, whose name is Memory." Dunsany has the trick of repeating words, phrases and thoughts until they seem to catch a swinging rhythm of their own. Alfred Noyes does the same. Perhaps it is a quality of the lyric poet, though Dunsany deals with the epic rather than with the other form. But they are both poets, be it lyric or epic. The quality that I have mentioned has the ability to transmit an element of sentiment to verse, for sentiment is a matter of association, and collation, the recalling of an emotion through its recurrence.

This is the only Dunsany play which contains anything nearly approaching a love story.

The story here is passionless, though it is beautiful. For once the woman is not satirised or poked fun at; for once she is allowed to live and be beautiful. But even so one somehow feels that she is here rather as a quality than as a personality. She is only a part of that desert life which calls the King. It is not the desert which is a background for their passion, for their passion is but a part of the background. At any rate, the play comes near to being a study of human relations, though it is not. It may seem to be, and we may for an instant be tricked into thinking that here is Dunsany in a new mood, showing us man in his relation to man, or to woman, but this is not

true. What the play really tells us is that Kings and cities are of little account in the great scheme of things; that the dreamer in the tents of the Arabs fulfills his destiny far better than the monarch, for a crown may crumble, while only dreams are eternal. When Bel-Narb goes to the city as King we see the false reigning over the fallacious; and when the King returns with Eznarza to the desert we see him who has found truth accept and embrace it. Like to like they return to each other forever.

The second act of the play is better than the first, because the finest poetry of the play is in that act, and because that act contains the only drama, the scene where Bel-Narb passes himself off as the King. There is not another dramatic scene in the play. The witchery of the atmosphere, the music of the lines, the beauty of the thoughts, the poetry and magic of the expression are what make the play really fine. There is no drama. One may be permitted to do this and still have a play when one is done, if one can do it in this wise. For the result will hold an audience, and there is form in the structure. A play is little more than this. There are several opportunities for strong dramatic action in the last act, but they have all been passed over. It seems to me right that this should be so, for the introduction of any element of violence, even though it does not express itself in physical terms, would be entirely out of keeping with the rest of the play. The delicacy of the whole conception would be thrown out of key by a note too hot with passion. In the play we see that world in which our bodies are contend with that greater world of the spirit, and we see the first world lose. “The Tents of the Arabs” may be said to be perhaps the least dramatic, and the most poetic of Dunsany’s plays. Were it not that its poetry is very exquisite the play would sink to an insignificant place in relation to the others; as it is we can never forget it.

There are two plays of Lord Dunsany’s which have not been produced. These are “The Laughter of the Gods” and “King Alexander.” Of the first I know only that it is about the length of “The Gods of the Mountain”, and that, though the gods are there, they never come on the stage. It is said to be one of Dunsany’s finest pieces of work, and I regret that I have not been privileged to read the manuscript. The second play is longer than any other he has written, and as it deals with that Alexander of history, I suppose one may call it “historical” in a certain sense. But from what I know of Lord Dunsany I am strongly of the opinion that its historical value is not its salient feature. That is reassuring at any rate. Lord Dunsany started to

collaborate with Padraic Colum in the writing of this play, but when Mr. Colum saw how little the play was his, and how much Dunsany's, he decided that he had better give the manuscript over. It would have been interesting had this collaboration been carried to a conclusion, but it is probable that each man was too great in himself to write with another. Collaboration usually means compromise, and genius compromises with nothing.

THE TALES

Beside his plays there are to Lord Dunsany's credit seven volumes of short tales; I call them tales for want of a better title. Sometimes they are mere random thoughts jotted down seemingly until such time as they found place in some more pretentious form. The book of "Fifty-One Tales" might so be described almost as a note-book, so fleeting, and so incomplete are some of the conceptions; yet there are others of which one might say that to write them alone was to have at least a finger upon immortality. There is not one of them which is not beautiful in thought and in expression. They give too strange inner glimpses of the man's philosophy, his entire loyalty to beauty, and his disgust of com-

HIS WORK promise. Baudelaire might have written them so far as form is concerned, but the point of view, and it is that which makes them important first of all, is Dunsany's alone. In some of the longer tales one may find pure metrical flights of surpassing loveliness, almost sensuous in the long swinging hexameters which are so reminiscent of the Greece by which they were doubtless suggested. The following fragment by the change of a syllable here and there is a perfect example of this phase:

"Clad though that city was in one robe always, in twilight, yet was its beauty worthy of even so lovely a wonder; city and twilight both were peerless but for each other. Built of a stone unknown in the world we tread were its bastions, quarried we know not where, but called by the gnomes *dbyx,* it so flashed back to the twilight its glories, color for color, that none can say of them where their boundary is, and which the eternal twilight, and which the City of Never; they are the twin-born children, the fairest daughters of Wonder. Time had been there, but not to work destruction; he had turned to a fair, pale green the domes that were made of copper, the rest he had left untouched, even he, the destroyer of cities, by what bribe I know not averted."

This is from a tale in "The Book of Wonder", which Dunsany calls "A Chronicle of Little Adventures at the Edge of the World." The Preface to this volume is very charming, and is even remindful of another invitation extended to us all some hundreds of years ago: "Come with me, ladies and

gentlemen who are in any wise weary of London: come with me: and those that tire at all of the worlds we know: for we have new worlds here."

It is in "The Gods of Pegana" that Dunsany creates that mythology upon which so much of his work is founded. He is discovered here playing with his gods as with a new toy, tender, ironic, and severe as the occasion seems to warrant. And little by little grew his gods in strength and stature, until they were as gods indeed. In 1912, W. B. Yeats published "Selections from the Writings of Lord Dunsany", to which Mr. Yeats contributed an Introduction from which I shall quote at length, for it gives an estimate of Dunsany from a fellow craftsman who is always as great in his generosity as in his genius.

"These stories and plays have for their continual theme the passing away of gods and men and cities before the mysterious power which is sometimes called by some great god's name but more often 'Time.'

His travelers who travel by so many rivers and deserts and listen to sounding names none heard before, come back with no tale that does not tell of vague rebellion against that power, and all the beautiful things they have seen get something of their charm from the pathos of fragility. This poet who has imagined colors, ceremonies and incredible processions that never passed before the eyes of Edgar Allan Poe or of De Quincey, and remembered as much fabulous beauty as Sir John Mandeville, has yet never wearied of the most universal of emotions and the one most constantly associated with the sense of beauty; and when we come to examine these astonishments that seem so alien we find that he has but transfigured with beauty the common sights of the world. He describes the dance in the air of large butterflies as we have seen it in the sun-steeped air of noon. 'And they danced, but danced idly, on the wings of the air, as some haughty queen of distant conquered lands might in her poverty and exile dance in some encampment of the gypsies for the mere bread to live by, but beyond this would never abate her pride to dance for one fragment more.' He can show us the movement of sand, as we have seen it where the sea shore meets the grass, but so changed that it becomes the deserts of the world:— 'And all that night the desert said many things softly and in a whisper, but I knew not what he said. Only the sand knew and arose and was troubled and lay down again and the wind knew. Then as the hours of the night went by, these two discovered the foot-tracks wherewith we had disturbed the holy

desert and they troubled over them and covered them up; and then the wind lay down and the sand rested.' Or he will invent some incredible sound that will yet call before us the strange sounds of the night, as when he says, 'Sometimes some monster of the sea coughed.' And how he can play upon our fears with that great gate of his, carved from a single ivory tusk dropped from some terrible beast; or with his tribe of wanderers that pass about the city telling one another tales that we know to be terrible from the blanched faces of the listeners though they tell them in an unknown tongue; *or* with his stone gods of the mountain, for 'when we see rock walking it is terrible,' 'rock should not walk in the evening.'

"Yet say what I will, so strange is the pleasure that they give, so hard to analyse and describe, I do not know why these stories and plays delight me. Now they set me to thinking of some old Irish jewel work, now of a sword covered with Indian Arabesques that hangs in a friend's hall, now of St. Mark's at Venice, now of cloud palaces in the sundown; but more often still of a strange country or state of the soul that once for a few weeks I entered in deep sleep and after lost and have ever mourned and desired."

Indeed the tales are very like to the plays except that lacking the fixed quality of the dramatic form they have become even more fanciful. "Fifty-One Tales" is perhaps a little more philosophical in tone; the gentle irony of the author shows itself again and again, sometimes flaring up fiercely in a glow of indignation at the cobbled streets that dare to wander over the dancing places of Pan, sometimes tenderly rebuking those who can see no other beauty than the tall chimneys of factories, and again the spirit changes to a wonder and an awe at the great immensity of existence.

It has been remarked that most of the plays would fit well into the form of stories, and it is quite as true, on the other hand, that many of the stories would do well as plays. Some of them could not be dramatised, they are too light, too fragile, and too lacking in action; but others would be splendid material. The tale of the magic window and of the war in the other world, the story of the quest of the Queen's tears, the dreadful adventure that befell three literary men, would all make plays, and there are many more that would go with them. Yet were they put into dramatic form there would be so much that would have to be lost from them that the change would be of questionable wisdom. For in these tales Dunsany has permitted the bridle rein to droop upon the neck of Pegasus, and that steed has wandered to and fro among the hills and meadows, he has sniffed the woods and has paused

to drink from the stream that runs through the pasture, and all life around him has known a golden and a glorious awakening. So there are some things which are too subtle, and there are some which are too delicate to be transmitted to a play, but though this be so the tales themselves would never have risen to their present importance had it not been that some of their kind were embodied in dramatic form. There is a force, a directness, a concentration, not only of attention, but of energy which gives a carrying power to the play which the tale can never attain. Nor is such attainment intended; the cow and the horse are both noble animals, but we would never look for milk from the latter.

Dunsany's tales convey us to lands that we never before knew existed. His favourite location is that which he calls "The Edge of the World", for the passion for geography is of the school-room, and Dunsany is too big to be confined within the mean and narrow circle of four walls. We may call some of the tales symbolic, and others allegorical, while to nearly all of them we may attribute some deep and hidden meaning that must be frantically HIS WORK searched for by women's clubs and classes in the drama. Far better is it to take them as they stand, fairy tales for grown ups, whose merit is in the story to be told and in the manner of the telling. What else comes to us easily and naturally from them may be considered as a gift from the gods. It may have been placed there carefully by the author, or he may never have seen it. The last seems to me the only true conclusion. But whatever we find we shall be happier, and even wiser, for it.

III. HIS PHILOSOPHY

LORD DUNSANY'S outlook on the art of the theater and that of the drama has by no means been confined by local restrictions. In 1913 there might have been seen in the pamphlet issued from Florence by Edward Gordon Craig an advertisement of Craig's school for the art of the theater. An international committee was appointed and the two members for Ireland were W. B. Yeats and Lord Dunsany. There is printed too in the same place a list of the donations and gifts toward this school, and here Dunsany's name "heads all the rest." This is doubtless because his was the only cash contribution; it was certainly a most generous one, consisting of one hundred pounds. What became of the venture, and how Lord Dunsany's hundred pounds were expended belongs to that part of history which is still immured in the archives of the unknown. At any rate it was a worthy cause, and one which, by reason of its very intangibility, was sure to appeal to both the members from Ireland.

That which is far away always seems to appeal to Dunsany most, and the further away it is the stronger the appeal. When he speaks of "King Argimenes and the Unknown Warrior" as being the first play about his own country he is very evidently not talking about Ireland, but of that mythical land of which he is the discoverer. There is a danger in all this, and it is no small danger. The realm of pure abstraction invites to rest and contemplation, especially after one has been deluged with the opposite phase of life to the point of nausea. But when one wanders so far from the things of every day that one's thoughts seem to have no application to the everyday man, it is high time to pause and consider the possibility of inter-terrestrial communication. There is a point where Dunsany in his effort to deal only with the big things ends by glorifying the little things, by doing the small thing infinitely well, instead of doing the big thing in any manner.

Not once but many times I have compared Lord Dunsany's work with that of ancient Greece, tracing in his plays and tales a resemblance to the old gods, and to the eternal battle between man and destiny. And I have pointed out the three points of view with which a poet may regard his own creations. But I neglected to say that all three of these points of view are the same. It is necessary for me to talk a little of religion in order that I may make this clear to you. I have no apology for including such a dissertation

here, for I am talking of a poet, of one who writes of Beauty; and surely God and Beauty are the same. Lord Dunsany has made his gods to be absolute, omnipotent, divine beyond the very outskirts of the cosmos, and in this I believe he has been mistaken. His gods are those of the ancient Hebrews; they are like the Egyptian gods, for they are implacable and apart. Not so the gods of Greece. Before they became material for the plays and stories of men they had been humanized, they had learned to suffer. Their followers endowed them with the traits of mankind, love, hate, gratitude, and they were even permitted to sorrow. In a word they were not only individual but personal. Then came the Christian religion founded upon Christ crucified, the greatest and most intimate personification of all. Lord Dunsany has removed his gods too wholly from the lives of men. They are depersonalized, detached, impenetrable, and vast, but they bear no relation to their servant, man. This mythology is wholly of itself, a thing apart, and therein lies its weakness. In the three points of view which I have offered as a basis for discussion, the first two must blend and lose themselves in the last before we can have the perfect, rounded work of art. Man in his relation to himself, and to his fellows, *is* in his relation to the whole, to the cosmos, to God. For while man is not a God, God is a man. The three cannot in reality be considered as separate entities; they are simply the three parts of one great whole. Lord Dunsany has taken one of these parts and has set it aside from the other two; he has isolated it, and differentiated it by every possible means. In this way he hoped to achieve infinity, but in reality he has only imposed a false restriction. God may be infinite, but He is not so in His relation to us, and so when we deal with gods and men we must, by very reason of the relationship, deal with those gods as finite. This was well understood by the great dramatists of Greece, and it is in the misunderstanding of this eternal fact that Dunsany has handicapped his power. Dunsany has shown us the falsity of the super-man of Nietzsche, but in his place we are given a super-god even more terrible. His place is that of pure abstract thought, devoid of emotion, and so neither in his gods nor in the world they rule do we find a trace of passion either human or divine. It is this that sets his work apart from the lives of men, and it is this which is his greatest limitation. Life is action motivated by emotion. Dunsany deals only with ideas. It is true that those ideas are beautiful, but no matter how beautiful they may be they are nothing more than the unborn children of life. In the dream world he has created we find many of the superficial traits

and idiosyncrasies of humanity, and these deceive us into thinking for a moment that his people are even as ourselves. But when we probe deeper we discover that it is all a sham, that not once does a single human emotion show above the surface. If this make-believe world is to remain as calm and as detached as he would have it there must be no human passion to disturb the quiet of the dream. That is why there are so few women in Dunsany's plays, and that is why, when they do appear, they serve merely as a background or a mouthpiece. For man's relationship with woman is more intimate than any other; it is vitally personal, and it is often great with passion. Intimacy, personality, and passion are three things with which Dunsany's gods may have nothing to do. If they had it might make them less god-like, but certainly it would make them more divine. Dunsany has remembered that in heaven there is "neither marrying nor giving in marriage," but his interpretation has been too literal. Let me say again that while a poet may, nay, must, have his head in the clouds, his feet must touch earth soil.

Dunsany is an aesthete. His beauty is that which we appreciate with our minds, and senses. We see the splendour of the pictures he paints for us, the wonder and magic of his faerie dawns and twilights soothes and dazzles our eyes, but not once do we feel a throb of living emotion. Our ears are enraptured with the music of his lines, we feel the wonderful rhythm, swing, and beat of phrase on phrase, but not once do we know the poignancy of the familiar. It is all apart. In his scenes, in the times he has given for his actions, in the very costumes of his people there is an effort made to universalize by choosing something which is typical of the whole and yet so different from each part that it cannot be confused with reality. One cannot universalize a thought by making it unlike; it must be more like than the thing itself. It must not be different; it must be even more than the same.

It may be thought that I have devoted much space to destroying that which to all of us has been beautiful. I have not intended to do so. It seems necessary to me to point out that the great fundamental error which Dunsany has made is that he has set himself to find the least common multiple instead of the greatest common divisor. In doing this he has imposed a limitation upon his work which must be recognized. He deals in the most delicate tints and shadings; his writing is a marvelous pastel, but it lacks the vigour and lasting power of oil. And now having said all this I will

ask you to forget it, if you have not so far disagreed with me as to make such forgetting unnecessary. It is interesting and even important that any work of art should be made to stand the test of analysis, and of comparison, but this test may be considered as a dose of peculiarly nasty medicine which once taken is soon forgotten. It is not what Dunsany should be, or what we would have him be that concerns us. It is what he is. Once the limitations of a work are defined there should be no complaining because the nature of that work does not extend beyond the limitations. We may regret that blue is not red, but it would surely be captious to insist just because it is not, that blue is an imperfect and unpleasant colour. Lord Dunsany has given us much that we stand greatly in need of; surely it would be ungracious to complain because it is not more. In an all too sordid day and age, when the romance of the open road seems to have given place to the romance of the counting-house, he has opened anew for us the door of wonder. For this we can never be too thankful. Dunsany has played the perfect host for us in his magic land; he has given us of his best, and we have found that that best is truly beautiful. He has done a fine, it may not be too much to say a great work, and he has done it with the deftness of the perfect craftsman. And now it is well to let the man speak for himself; it is only just that his voice should be heard in a discussion which touches him so nearly. The following extracts are from an article contributed by Lord Dunsany to the *National Review* of London during 1911, and the title of the article is "Romance and the Modern Stage."

"Something must be wrong with an age whose drama deserts romance; and a cause that soonest occurs to one is the alarming spread of advertisement, its frightful vulgarity, and its whole-hearted devotion to the snaring of money.

"What advertisement (the screaming voice of our age) seeks to be other than a lie, and if the actual statement is literally true, then all the more must the suggestion correct this error by being especially false.

"Everywhere the sacredness of business is preached, everywhere it is pointed to as an end, to this great error advertisements testify alike in all places; children are brought up on them; for everything sublime or beautiful that any city shows them twenty times do they see far more noticeable, some placard sordid with avarice. Advertisements drop from the books that children read, they confront them in their homes.

They stand large between them and the scenery when they travel. Will anyone say that their preaching is neglected; not unless the bill-sticker has lost his cunning. Those who are thus educated will learn to bow down to business. When most we need romance, romance has been frightened away.

"As he steals over dewy hills in the dusk of summer evenings he sees those placards standing in the fields and praising Mammon; to Romance they seem the battlements of the fortress of Avarice, and he is gone at once.

"It is not from business that romance has fled, but from the worshiping of it; the calf was not an unclean beast among the Israelites, but when they worshiped the Golden Calf then God deserted them.

"To-day a work of art must be defended in terms of business. 'What's the use of it?' they will say of some painting, and woe to the artist who cannot answer, 'It brings me in so much.'

"A year or so ago this age of ours spoke through the pen of some writer of a brief letter to a journal. The fate of Crosby Hall was being discussed. I do not remember the arguments; it was beautiful, it was historic, and in the way. And the age spoke and said, 'Let us have a little more business and less sentiment.' "That was the great error put into a sentence which the age inspired its prophet to write to the press.

"Human happiness is nothing more than a fairy ring of human sentiments dancing in the moonlight. The wand that compels them may possibly be of gold. Business, perhaps, may be needed to make them dance, but to think that business, the possible means, should be more desirable than the certain end showed that that obscure writer whom the age had inspired was ignorant firstly even of himself and the little fanciful things that he intended some day to do. Thus is the end given up for the sake of the means, and truth and beauty sacrificed every day upon innumerable counters, until the generation fostered among these things says to the artist, 'What do you get by it?' and to the poet, 'Does it pay?'

"In discussing the state of the stage one has to watch the affairs of its neighboring kingdoms, the stalls and the pit. If their conditions are sordid, romance will not easily flourish across the border.

"The drama is the mirror of life if not something more. And an age that paints its woodwork red to ape mahogany, that makes respected fortunes by mixing up sulphuric acid with glucose and calling the product beer, the age of flannelette and the patent pill... such an age may well have such a drama as will be pleasant and acceptable to the doers of these things: for when

insincerity has once raised up its honored head in politics and commerce, as it has, and in daily life as well, it is quite certain that its worshipers will demand a drama sufficiently stale and smug to suit their lives.

"In any beautiful age a poet is scarcely noticed, he is the natural product of the beauty of the time, he is no more than the lilac in the Spring; only in evil days does he appear half-witted, having the foolish look of a lily upon a pavement.

"I am quite ignorant of the cost or feasibility of risking new experiments in the theater. I have no means or method of producing romantic drama. I should not dare to advise and have nothing to say except to ask that the theater be set up against the false, that the highest realism, the realism of the poets, who see the whole of life's journey, be set up against the lower realism that sees only how man equips himself with morals, and money, and custom for the journey; but knows not where the journey leads nor why man wants to go. That is what we need more to-day than in any age.

"But romance has not been driven from the stage only by those that like the false and the sham — obviously among these romance will not abide for romance is the most real thing in life — but he has been jostled out of the way by the enemies of the shams that are too busy trying to overthrow the false to have leisure to let their fancies dance on the hills. For our age is full of new problems that we have not as yet found time to understand, that bewilder and absorb us, the gift of matter enthroned and endowed by man with life; I mean iron vitalized by steam and rushing from city to city and owning men for slaves. I know the boons that machinery has conferred on man, all tyrants have boons to confer, but service to a dynasty of steam and steel is a hard service, and gives little leisure to fancy to flit from field to field. Machinery has given us many problems to solve, and it may be a long time yet before we make the ultimate discovery that the ways and means of living are less important than life. When every man has recognized that for himself, we shall come out on the other side of all our problems, and laying aside our universal interest in the latest information about the newest question upon any subject that arises anywhere, we shall come to know a little about something once more, as our forefathers did before the days of encyclopedias. Then we shall have drama again that shall concern itself with life rather than with our anxious uncertainties about it. But the discoveries of steam and electricity which have given life to matter, are as perplexing to every one of us as what came out of the bottle that the

Arabian fisherman found, and we have not yet recovered from our perplexity. I am not criticising machinery. I stand in awe of so terrible a genie whose shadow has darkened all the midlands of England; but I mention it to explain the newness and suddenness of our problems, our unfamiliarity with ourselves and the puzzled expression on the faces of all who deal with these things, and the difference between the stories we tell, whereat romance yawns loudly, and the simpler tales and songs of more rural people.

"Romance is so inseparable from life that all we need to obtain romantic drama is for the dramatist to find any age and any country where life is not too thickly veiled and cloaked with puzzles and conventions, in fact to find a people that is not in the agonies of self consciousness. For myself I think that it is simpler to imagine such a people, as it saves the trouble of reading to find a romantic age, or the trouble of making a journey to lands where there is no press.

"It is easy for a philanthropist to endow a hospital, and easy for a benevolent man to work for the sake of the poor, their goal is near to them, logic supports them and reasonable men applaud them upon the way.

But the way of the poet is the way of the martyr. The greater his work the more infinite his goal. His own eyes cannot assess it. There is little logic in a lyric, and notoriously little money. How can an age which values all things in gold understand so unvalued a thing as a romantic fancy?

"The kind of drama that we most need to-day seems to me to be the kind that will build new worlds for the fancy, for the spirit as much as the body sometimes needs a change of scene.

"Every morning railway trains, telegraphs, and motors await to spread the latest information everywhere. Even were this information of value there would be more than men's minds could digest. I do not object to detailed accounts of murder trials, life is at a high tension in a court where a man is on trial for his life; what does the harm is meaningless reports of cricket matches spun out with insipid phrases and newly invented sham slang, which fill a people's mind with nothingness, and are widely read by men who no longer die, but pass away at their residence. Phrases are parasites in the fur of thought and in time they destroy the thing upon which they feed. Many and many an erstwhile clever head pours forth phrase after phrase picked up from to-day and yesterday, behind which thought is dead, and only the parasites left. Too much information about the fads and

fashions of empty lives is stealing year by year the traditions and simplicity even of rural people. Yet places remain unaffected by all these things, these are the hunting ground of the dramatist. Then there is the other world — the world of fancy. It seems to me that a play that is true to fancy is as true as one that is true to modern times, for fancy is quite as real as more solid things and every bit as necessary to a man. A fancy of some sort is the mainspring and end of every human ambition, and a writer who turns away from conventions and problems to build with no other bricks than fancy and beauty is doing no trivial work, his raw material is the dreams, and whims, and shadowy impulses in the soul of man, out of which all else ariseth."

Here we may see Dunsany as a critic, less of the drama than of the age which begets it, and less of the age than of the philosophy which underlies its spirit. One is inclined to wonder too whether the fact of Dunsany's critical ability does not in some wise explain many other things about his work. Often we find him in a critical mood in his tales and plays, and we realize again that good criticism is always creative in the highest sense. But this tendency on the part of Dunsany emphasizes the fact that his outlook is essentially intellectual. Dunsany realizes, but he does not experience; he perceives, but he does not feel. In his desire to get away from the life of to-day he ends almost by getting away from all life. His drama is that of imagination coated with a veneer of observation, albeit this same observation is of the keenest and most sensitive description.

In his disregard of human relations Lord Dunsany may be compared to many of those who have enlivened literature with the creations of pure fancy. Of such are Hans Andersen, and Grimm; Lewis Carroll and Barrie likewise belong in this category, but none of these have proceeded to the length which has made Dunsany unique, certainly in the contemporary, and probably in the previous literary age. We have had a literature based on folk-lore more than once; the Greek drama partook of this element, as has the literature of Germany and the northern countries from time to time; it is to be found to-day in the work of nearly all the Irish poets and dramatists. But in every instance this folk-lore has been the gradual growth of centuries until finally it has been preserved for all time upon the printed page. But with Dunsany it is very obviously quite different. He has created a folk-lore, or better, a mythology of his own, and in so doing he has managed to invest it with some of the actual atmosphere of antiquity. The whole conception is a most extraordinary *tour de force.*

This creation has offered him unlimited scope for pure flights of fancy; he is bound down by no possible restriction of time or place, or adherence to tradition. He makes his traditions as he goes along. Actual folk-lore is always closely entwined with the actual religion of its people, and thus it proceeds not only from what men think, but from what they feel. An artificial folk-lore such as Dunsany's, being the product of the imagination of one man, is purely mental, and thus fails to satisfy on one side no matter how beautiful it may be in itself. Imagination is entirely a mental quality. And so, as the greatest art must always be emotion expressed in terms of the intellect, we must convict Dunsany of half measures. He deals not with emotion, but with states of mind, and be it said here again that, lacking or not in the bigger and more vital quality, that which he has given us is of the most surpassing beauty. It is the art of the intellectual aristocrat first, last, and always, and therein lies its weakness; but such as it is, it is a beautiful art. It is not the art of one who feels, it is not even the art of one who thinks, but it is the art of one who dreams.

One could almost wish to discard all the rest and to be content with dreams alone, Dunsany's are so potent in their magic power.

Dramatically too there is a loss to be noted. Dunsany sometimes disregards a dramatic situation in the very fear that it will conceive a human emotion of violence at variance with his established code. There is always one scene in "King Argimenes and the Unknown Warrior" for which we look from the very outset, and which never comes. It seems almost important enough to be called a *scène à faire.* This is the meeting of the two Kings, Argimenes and Damiak. What a wonderful situation it would be, and how many notes could be touched upon in its rising scale. But it is not there. For the rest I have called attention to them as occasion arose as we discussed the plays, so there is no need to consider them further here. Whatever his shortcomings as a dramatist, and there lives not one, nor has one ever lived, in which some flaws cannot be found, Dunsany has done the remarkable thing of writing plays which are startling in their dramatic power and really fine in their poetry. They are big in conception, and artistic in execution. Their dialogue might serve as a model for many dramatists who are accounted of more importance than is Dunsany, and their colour and atmosphere exert at times an almost hypnotic effect.

It may be interesting to see what Dunsany has to say concerning a fellow worker, Synge, no less, in the London *Saturday Review* during 1910. The

following bit is taken from a review of Synge's "Deirdre of the Sorrows", his finest work so far as regards beauty of expression.

"It is so long now since Pegasus shied at a factory whistle or at one of our own ha-penny newspapers blowing down the road, and soared and left the people and remained aloof from them the way he was wont not to do — for the Elizabethans trotted him in and out wherever men sang, or swore, or followed their callings — it is so long now since his ears caught the sound of the streets that it is strange to think of a poet only over the Irish sea writing in a peasantry's common tongue. And this is what J. M. Synge was able to do as Homer was able, and as Keats, for instance, and Francis Thompson, were not.

"Synge is never far away from the fields of men, his is not the inspiration of the skylark remote from the earth; our wonder at his fancy is as our wonder at the flight of the white owl low down near beautiful fields."

For not a little time past we have been possessed of a drama which in its effort to mirror life has gradually become more and more photographic and microcosmic. This is assuredly the art of a mechanical age, an age not of creation but of reproduction. Our music is provided by the phonograph and the mechanical piano; our painting is given us through the medium of the illustrated supplements of the Sunday papers; our drama has degenerated to that point where in its effort to be "real" it has ceased to be anything more than that. What a boon it was to the man of the theater when he found that that which was impossible of achievement on the stage came easily within his grasp in the moving-pictures. Here at least we have real trees, real houses, and real battles. The only thing left to wish for is that the actors be given real guns with real powder and bullets, and that they really discharge these weapons at one another. Perhaps in that way we may, through this very obsession for reality, be rid of some of the most unreal things that ever desecrated the name of art. This realism, or naturalism as it may best be called, rarely has penetrated beneath the surface of humanity, and though it has on occasion cut below the skin it has never yet touched on that sacred, and therefore shocking thing of which modern society stands so greatly in dread. If it ever had so touched, the white heat of the spirit would have withered it away. We have dealt with the isolated example, with the abnormal instance; why, no one can tell unless we admit to a morbid curiosity. It is the age of science, and we have applied the rules of science to the principles of art — and we have failed most miserably. There is every

indication that this phase is well on its decline. There is every reason to believe that the romantic renaissance for which we have been waiting is at last within reach. We have a “new art of the theater” which is in reality an old art revitalized and brought up to date. Let us be thankful for it. It is what we need. We may even begin to see signs of a “new” drama, and for this let us be thankful also. We need it as a dying man needs life.

We call one man a realist because he deals in strange mental conditions, and we call another man a romanticist because he deals with common emotional conditions. Personally I am strongly of the conviction that the romanticist is the more real of the two by far. Lord Dunsany does not come under either heading according to this definition. That is because both the realist and the romanticist deal with life, though from different points of view. Lord Dunsany deals not with life, but with dreams. For long it has been forgotten that there were dreams, except when one had eaten too much lobster in some gilded restaurant after seeing a bad play. And then the dreams were not such as to make one desire them. It had almost passed beyond our recollection that there was a land in which realist and romanticist ceased to exist in themselves and blended into one. Dunsany has taught us again the name of that land, and he has called it Wonder. There we find no dramatist who may be labelled with a scientific name; there is only the dreamer. To him all things are possible, and the stranger they are the more probable is their happening. As in this life of the flesh we catch fleeting glimpses of that other life which has no boundaries, so in that life do we see now and again something which may remind us of the existence we have left behind. The dream world is not empty for us; the land of wonder is peopled thickly with those who are glad to give us welcome; the people of the hills are there and waiting.

Dunsany has opened for us the great gates leading into that other world so near, and yet so distant from us all. Like all the little people his creatures have no souls, for if they had then Time might overtake them. For the only thing in all the whole wide world that is imperishable, the only thing that Time stands baffled before, is a dream, even a little one. And that is most of all what Dunsany has told us, that a too great intensity of interest with the things of everyday life, the transient things, is just so much ground given up to that great scourge of all the ages, Time. In our fight with him he hurls the years at us, and our houses crumble, our cities fall into ruin, and our civilization passes away. All our learning, all our wealth, all our

accomplishment cannot turn him even so much as a minute from his path. And all we have with which to oppose him are dreams. Only against them is Time powerless.

The world is very tired of thinking, especially about itself, and we who are each a part of the world are all tired too. We have thought so much lately. There seems to be hardly a human problem left untouched, and uninvestigated, and there seems to be hardly a human problem solved. Perhaps we have thought too much and dreamed too little. We have passed from the drama of the boudoir to that of the laboratory and the dissecting room; it may well be that the time has come when these things shall leave us, when we shall pass from the drama of the moment to the drama of all time, and from the destruction of little things to the preservation of great things.

It seems to me that there must be no one who can see the plays of Lord Dunsany or read them without feeling an immense sense of relief as at the release of some intolerable burden. His plays and tales are told to us as very few could have told them for more than many years. He is one of the great figures in a great literary movement, — in some ways he is the greatest figure, — and whatever Time may do to blot from the memory of man that which has passed, I think that the work of Dunsany will remain for always. For he has dreamed, and dreams are imperishable.

He has shown us beauty, which is truth, and truth is immortal. And so, while Lord Dunsany will in due course come to “pass away at his residence”, it is quite as certain that he will never die.

IV. LETTERS

THE following letters are taken from a correspondence between Mr. Stuart Walker, who has staged three of the Dunsany plays in his Portmanteau Theater, and Lord Dunsany. The letters throw light on not a little connected with the plays, in acting, staging, and in the philosophy underlying them. Lord Dunsany's letters are given verbatim, and those of Mr. Walker have been relieved only of such matter as did not seem to have a direct bearing on the subject at hand. The letters speak for themselves, and require no further introduction or comment.

Excerpts from a letter from Lord Dunsany to Mrs. Emma Garrett Boyd
Not dated.

... There are many others who know me and know my work, and a great many that know me and never heard of my work, and many others to whom my work is a harmless eccentricity or a chance occupation less important than golf.

... I was wounded less than three weeks ago. The bullet has been extracted and I am healing up rapidly. I am also under orders for France as soon as I have recovered.

... Sometimes I think that no man is taken hence until he has done the work that he is here to do, and, looking back on five battles and other escapes from death, this theory seems only plausible; but how can one hold it when one thinks of the deaths of Shelley and Keats!

But in case I shall not be able to explain my work, I think the first thing to tell them is that it does not need explanation. One does not explain a sunset nor does one need to explain a work of art. One may analyse, of course; that is profitable and interesting, but the growing demand to be told What It's All About before one can even enjoy, is becoming absurd.

Don't let them hunt for allegories. I may have written an allegory at some time, but if I have, it was a quite obvious one, and as a general rule, I have nothing to do with allegories.

What is an allegory? A man wants the streets to be better swept in his town, or he wants his neighbors to have rather cleaner morals. He can't say

so straight out, because he might be had up for libel, so he says what he has to say, but he says it about some extinct king in Babylon, but he's thinking of his one horse town all the time. Now when I write of Babylon, there are people who can not see that I write of it for love of Babylon's ways, and they think I'm thinking of London still and our beastly Parliament.

Only I get further east than Babylon, even to Kingdoms that seem to lie in the twilight beyond the East of the World. I want to write about men and women and the great forces that have been with them from their cradle up — forces that the centuries have neither aged nor weakened. Not about people who are so interested about the latest mascot or motor that not enough remains when the trivial is sifted from them.

I will say first that in my plays I tell very simple stories, — so simple that sometimes people of this complex age, being brought up in intricacies, even fail to understand them. Secondly, no man ever wrote a simple story yet, because he is bound to color it with his own experience. Take my "Gods of the Mountain." Some beggars, being hard up, pretend to be gods. Then they get all that they want. But Destiny, Nemesis, the Gods, punish them by turning them into the very idols they desire to be.

First of all you have a simple tale told dramatically, and along that you have hung, without any deliberate intention of mine — so far as I know — a truth, not true to London only or to New York or to one municipal party but to the experience of man. That is the kind of way that man does get hit by destiny. But mind you, that is all unconscious, though inevitable. I am not trying to teach anybody anything. I merely set out to make a work of art out of a simple theme, and God knows we want works of art in this age of corrugated iron. How many people hold the error that Shakespeare was of the school room! Whereas he was of the playground, as all artists are.

Dunsany.

Stuart Walker to Lady Dunsany
June 6, 1916.

My dear Lady Dunsany:

A cable from Miss Wollersen two days ago had informed me of Lord Dunsany's misfortune. I trust that he is fairly on the road to complete

recovery; it seems a great tragedy that one with universal messages should be silenced by rebellions and wars.

I have read “The Tents of the Arabs.” It is beautifully poetic but its lack of action makes it unavailable for me now. I have several plays of the type in preparation and I have to be careful not to attempt too many wherein the only movement is of the mind and spirit. But should the play still be free at the end of next season I should like to consider it again.

Before closing my letter I want to tell you that the costume plates for “The Golden Doom” are very promising. Mr. Frank Zimmerer, the artist, is a most capable young man and he uses Lord Dunsany’s green with great effectiveness. I call it the Dunsany Green. How else could I designate it? — the Green gods, Klesh, the green sword in “King Argimenes”, the green lantern outside Skarui’s door!

With every good wish for Lord Dunsany’s complete and rapid recovery,

Stuart Walker.

Lord Dunsany to Stuart Walker
June 28, 1916.

Dear Mr. Walker:

I am still in Ireland as I am still recovering from my wound, though I am very nearly ready to go now. Had I not been wounded I should now be in the trenches. So I am answering your letter to Lady Dunsany. Hughes Massie, I am glad to hear, are arranging for you to have “The Gods of the Mountain.”.... Whenever I may be abroad or dead, Lady Dunsany will make all arrangements. “Argimenes” was the first play I ever wrote about my own country. “The Glittering Gate” I had already written, chiefly to please Yeats, but that play never interested me. “Argimenes” was the first play laid in the native land of my spirit, and of course it has a first play’s imperfections, the most visible of which is I fear a downward trend from a fine scene of the King and his bone to a mere rounding off and ceasing, instead of rising the whole way like “The Gods of the Mountain.” Indeed I think I wrote the whole play from a sudden fancy I had of a king in rags gnawing a bone, but that fancy may have come from an inner memory of a time when I too was hungry, sitting and sleeping upon the ground with other dishevelled men in Africa.

The last stage direction in this play *(in a voice of protest)* was suggested to me by a producer and pleased me at the time but I almost think my own idea was better. I made Zarb say "Majesty" in awe. That he should throw away good bones reveals to Zarb, as nothing else has done, the pinnacle to which Argimenes has really risen. The other way is funny, but I think I ought to have stuck to my own inspiration. I amuse myself sometimes by cutting seals on silver and on the chance that it may amuse you if it arrives unbroken I will put one of them or more on this envelope.

Though the world may be growing more barbarous in Flanders, what you tell me of your aspirations shows that elsewhere it is becoming more civilized. As a matter of fact it is not the ruins of Ypres or a street in Dublin that shows the high water mark of our times' barbarity; it is to be seen in London in our "musical."

"comedies", in much of our architecture, and in toys made for children.

Yours sincerely, Dunsany.



Photo by White Studio. Courtesy of Portmanteau Theater

THE GODS OF THE MOUNTAIN
Agmar tells the one who doubts to go

Stuart Walker to Lord Dunsany
July 12, 1916.

My dear Lord Dunsany:

When my mail was brought to me this morning the first thing that caught my eye was a light green seal which represented a god of the mountain. Before I turned to the face of the envelope I called my mother and my cousin to tell them that I need search no further for the design for the costumes. Then one of them asked who made the seals. The moment I turned the envelope I recognized your writing, which I had seen in the manuscript of "The Queen's Enemies."

Your letter pleased me very much, but shortly after I had read it, I heard that the rights to "A Night at an Inn" had gone definitely to Mr. Harrison Gray Fiske. Of course I was deeply disappointed for the addition of this play to my repertory would have meant a great deal to me. Mr. Fiske is much older in the theatre than I am, but I am hoping to make you very proud of my work on your other plays. I cabled to you to-day about "Argimenes" with more assurance than I have had for some time. Your suggestion that Zarb's final "Majesty" is spoken in awe shows me that I shall be able to stage your work as you would like it. I have always, in reading the play aloud, read the word in awe. The direction "in a voice of protest" was, frankly, a shock to me because it changed Zarb and weakened the remarkable climax of the play, which by the way, I think builds very well in interest with sure dramatic strides — not as inevitably as "The Gods of the Mountain", but beautifully, nevertheless.

I am going to tell you a few of my ideas about play-producing because I feel at ease after reading your statements about our uncivilized musical comedies and our absurd toys, for children. To my mind the play is the most important consideration. The 'author must know what he is talking about and why he says what he does in the way he says it. There is a story to tell and I try to tell it in the author's way. I don't like symbolism as such, and I make no effort to foist upon an audience a suggestion that there is always some deep hidden meaning. There is a story to tell and that story must always have a certain effect upon the audience, and that effect is gained primarily through the actor's ability to translate the author's meaning into mental and physical action. The scenery must never be obtrusive; it is not and cannot be an end in itself; but to me lights come next to the actor in importance. With lights of various color and intensity, vast changes in space, and time, and thought can be suggested. My lighting system is very remarkable. Oh, how I wish you might see the beggars turn to stone.

I know your feeling for your first beloved play "King Argimenes" and I shall treat it with a fine affection. It seems almost wicked to discuss terms about beautiful things, about poetry; but I want you to know I am eager to help your name to its rightful place in America, and to try to see that your business treatment is just. I think "King Argimenes" will be especially successful in the spring and summer and in California when we play in the open air.

Stuart Walker.

Lord Dunsany to Stuart Walker
Brae Head House, Londonderry.

July 14, 1916.

Dear Mr. Walker:

I've just cabled accepting the terms of your cable received this morning. I hope you will like the play and that you will find it a success. You will probably not have the difficulties that I found in Dublin when "Argimenes" was acted. I found that the actors "off" who had the rather impressive chant of "Illuriel is fallen" to do, not being in sight of the audience would never trouble to do it accurately. There are two such chants, a mournful one and a joyous one, and they used to mix them up a good deal.

But then they used not to rehearse properly there.

I wish that print could convey the tone of voice in which things should be said, but it can't.

Yours sincerely, Dunsany.

Stuart Walker to Lord Dunsany
July 17, 1916.

My dear Lord Dunsany:

The possession of "The Gods of the Mountain" and "The Golden Doom" makes me very happy. Now I am waiting word on "King Argimenes" with great hopes. It is a big play, but I am not expecting any such popular success for it, or for "The Golden Doom", as "A Night at an Inn" will have or "The Gods of the Mountain" ought to have.

The loss of "A Night at an Inn" was a great disappointment to me. I saw it the first night at the Neighborhood Playhouse and I told the Misses Lewisohn then that I would do anything to get it. In my eagerness to get in touch with you I am afraid that I hurt or displeased them: but the process of reaching you seemed so terribly slow. I had already told them that I should defer to them even if I succeeded in reaching you first and that if I got the play I should let them use it at the Neighborhood Playhouse. Mr. Fiske

ought to make a great popular success of his production. The play is quite the best short melodrama I have ever seen, but to my heart and mind, "The Golden Doom", "The Gods of the Mountain", and "King Argimenes" are far greater plays. "The Queen's Enemies" is most interesting, but its mechanical requirements are difficult of achievement for the present. "The Tents of the Arabs" impressed me very much. I hope that I may try it sometimes when my resources are greater.

With every good wish, Stuart Walker.

Stuart Walker to Lord Dunsany
July 24.

My dear Lord Dunsany:

Mr. Zimmerer brought the scene designs for both "The Golden Doom" and "The Gods of the Mountain" last night, and I set them up in the model of my theatre to test them under the lights. "The Golden Doom" is really a remarkable setting. There are the great iron doors in the centre at the back of the stage. At each side of the doorway is a tall green column, with a black basalt base three feet high, standing on a basalt circle in a gray flooring. Hanging between the columns just below the flies is a large winged device in dark blue with a touch of orange here and there. Extending from the gates diagonally to the sides of the proscenium are very high black marble walls with a narrow dull-colored enameled brick "baseboard." The only vivid colorings on the stage except the costumes are the green columns and an orange design on the iron doors. As in the winged device, Mr. Zimmerer has followed Assyrian and Babylonian designs closely in the cut and color of the costumes.

As the Portmanteau Theatre main stage is rather small, and the forestage is much used for the action of the plays, there were some difficult problems in the settings of "The Gods of the Mountain." In the first act Mr. Zimmerer uses a small section of the wall between two bastions. It is built rather fantastically of colored rocks, and above it one can see the copper domes of Kongros, and in the distance the emerald peak of Marma. This last detail is interesting but I am not yet sure that it is best to have the mountain seen far beyond the city in the first act because I want to get an effect in the second and third acts. The Metropolitan Hall of Kongros is quite simple. The

principal detail is a broad lunetteshaped window through which Marma is visible and it is with the play of lights upon Marma that I want to gain some impressive effects. In the costumes as in the wall of the first act Mr. Zimmerer uses oriental themes with no attempt at accuracy.

Kongros was in its heyday we believe some time after the fall of Illuriel and as we place it, it stood somewhere west of the Hills of Ting, but not so far southwest as ancient Ithara.

All our good wishes go to you, my dear Lord Dunsany.

S. W.



Photo by White Studio. Courtesy of Portmanteau Theater

THE GODS OF THE MOUNTAIN

Agmar tells Slag to have a prophecy made

Lord Dunsany to Stuart Walker Londonderry, Ireland.

August 7, 1916.

My dear Mr. Walker:

Another welcome letter from you reminds me that I have not answered your last. I was waiting for a mood which should be worthy of the occasion, but I have had few moods but lazy ones ever since I was wounded.

I have always heard works of art spoken of as valueless or of value, usually the former, and on the rare occasions when they have been admitted to be of value I had found that they take their place with cheese. They are in fact a commodity or "article", and have a price, and are valued according to it. It is therefore a great delight to find that you look on a work of art as a work of art. I had almost forgotten that it was one. I am sorry about "A Night at an Inn." But as you say, it cannot touch the little "Golden Doom", while to compare "The Gods of the Mountain" to it would be like comparing a man to his own shadow. Talking of "The Golden Doom", there is one sentence in Björkman's preface which particularly delighted me and that is the one in which he says that I show a child's desire for a new toy and the fate of an empire as being of equal importance in the scheme of things. That is exactly what I intended, the unforeseen effect of the very little — not that I am trying to teach anybody anything of course, I may mention white chalk while I am telling a story if I have happened to notice that chalk is white, but without any intention of thrusting a message into the ears, or a lesson on whiteness: people seem to have been so much frightened by the school-master when they were young that they think they see him in everyone ever after.

Often critics see in my plays things that I did not know were there. And that is as it should be, for instinct is swift and unconscious, while reason is plodding and slow, and comes up long afterward and explains things, but instinct does not stop for explanations. An artist's "message" is from instinct to sympathy. I try sometimes to explain genius to people who mistrust or hate it by telling them it is doing anything, as a fish swims or a swallow flies, perfectly, simply and with absolute ease. Genius is in fact an infinite capacity for *not* taking pains.

August 8.

It has just occurred to me that perhaps you never got my cable in answer to your letter about "Argimenes." I cabled "Right" meaning that I accepted your terms; but the Censor, who is wiser than I, found in this message a

menace to the stability of the Realm, and an explanation of my invidious cable was demanded. This I supplied, and thought the cable had gone, but it may have been considered too dangerous in the end. What tended to annoy me about this delay was, that even if my cable had been an invitation through you to Hindenburg to land an army corps on the Irish coast, I am one of the people who would have to assist to push it off again, and as my name, rank, and regiment had to be signed in the cable form this thought might have occurred to others. Perhaps you got my cable after all, though delayed, but in any case it's no use grumbling.

About "The Golden Doom." The Haymarket Theatre acquired the rights for five years in November, 1912, but in any country in which they neglected to perform it they lost the rights after three years, and they returned to me. This applies to the U. S. A.; the rights returned to me last winter, but in any case they do not belong to the printer or binder of "Five Plays," What is more important is that the larger the children are the more they might be apt to blur the point of the play which is, that though they are clearly seen, they are overlooked and ignored. If the girl child appeared say 14 the sentries would probably be looking at her, if she was 15 they would never take their eyes off her the whole time, if they were the kind of sentries I have met — and they probably were in Zericon at the time Babylon fell. The audience would probably feel this. But to go on talking about important matters like war to a soldier, while small children are playing in the dirt or sand, is humanly natural.

I thought I noticed this at the Haymarket, when they started with small children but altered the cast afterward and changed the size. But of course it is only a matter of illusion.

The "public" must needs know exactly "when it all happened" so I never neglect to inform them of the time. Since man does not alter it does not in the least matter what time I put, unless I am writing a play about his clothes or his motor car, so I put "about the time of the fall of Babylon", it seemed a nice breezy time, but "about the time of the invention of Carter's Pills" would of course do equally well. Well, the result was that they went to the British Museum and got the exact costumes of the period in Babylon, and it did very nicely. There are sure to have been people who said, "Now my children you shall come to the theatre and enjoy yourselves, *but at the same time* you shall learn what it was really like in Babylon." The fact is the schoolmaster has got loose, and he must be caged, so that people can enjoy

themselves without being pounced on and made to lead better lives, like African natives being carried away by lions while they danced.

Military duties have somewhat interfered with the course of this letter and the taking of a wasps' nest to amuse some children that live near here, and my own small boy, may interfere with it further.

I meant when I got your last letter to write to you sometime and send you a few comments on "Argimenes", for print unfortunately cannot convey the tone in which words are said, and often in the tone is the meaning. I have "Argimenes" by me now and probably shan't find much to say about it. First of all on page 63 (American edition). Zarb in his utterance of the word Majesty shows that he attaches more importance to the empty glory of being called *Majesty* than to the possession of a horse or any other advantage he enumerates. But after all this sort of detail is too trivial to be of any interest and you will have noticed already how Argimenes with his wider views and knowledge of strategy appears witless to Zarb when it comes to the detail of the daily life of a soldier of the slave guard. Probably if we were suddenly made to live amongst insects it would come out that we knew nothing about the smell of grass or even its exact color, and the insects would wonder how any creature living in the world could be so ignorant of a thing so common as grass.

Another little note. Page 75. An old slave—" Will Argimenes give *me* a sword?" He says it as one who sees a dream too glorious to be true.

Old Slave— "A *sword!*" He says it as one the dream of whose life has come true. "No, no, I must not." He says it as one who sees it was only a dream. But in the book this change between *sword* and *no* is not indicated. Of course I always liked to read my play aloud before it was acted to show the actors what my ideas were, which print often fails to do.

Aug. 9.

I have just received yours of July 19th this morning, and see by it that you never received the cable that I sent and for which I paid. Do not think badly of our Censor, but reflect that God for his own good reasons has given wisdom to some, while upon others for reasons as divinely wise he has showered stupidity. I have no redress.

Yours very sincerely, Dunsany.

Lord Dunsany to Stuart Walker

Ebrington Barracks, Londonderry, Ireland.

My dear Mr. Walker, —

My last letter to you ended somewhat abruptly, my mind being too preoccupied with the stupidity of the Censor who seems to have stopped my cable to you in which I accepted your terms for my two act play on July 14th. I write to say how the pictures of the plays you have done delight me. You evidently have the spirit of Fairyland there.

August 13.

I am glad you like the seal of the god among the mountains. I cut seals on silver whenever leisure and an idea fall in the same hour, and this one is almost my favorite.

I was looking the other day at a photograph that Miss Lewisohn sent me of "A Night at an Inn" and I was much struck with the print of a spaniel with a duck in his mouth hanging on the wall; such a hackneyed homely touch as that must have made a splendid background for Klesh when he came in so faithfully following the stage directions, which are that "he was a long sight uglier than anything else in the world."

Let me hear how you are getting on with "Argimenes" and "The Golden Doom." I don't get many letters from America and as it seems to be the most fertile soil upon which my work has fallen I should be glad to hear oftener from there. I don't suppose my brother officers know that I write, and all European soils are so harrowed by war that nothing grows there but death.

August 15.

I have just received your letters dated July 24th and 26th.

I am glad to hear that you have after all received the cable I sent off on July 14th.

Mr. Zimmerer's designs sound magnificent. Your words 'with no attempt at accuracy' please me, they are like a window open in a heated schoolroom; for this age has become a schoolroom, and nasty, exact, little facts hem us round, leaving no room for wonder.

You have placed Kongros exactly; all maps agree with you; for though they do not actually mark it, the tracks across the desert — taken in conjunction with the passage over the hills of Ting — and regarded in the light of all travellers' tales — can only-point to one thing. It is there, as you

have said, that one will find Kongros. Yet one counsel and a warning the traveller should take to his heart, let him heap scorn upon himself in the Gate, let him speak meanly of himself and vilify his origin, for they tell a fable to-day, even in Kongros Gate (the old men tell it seated in the dust) of how there once came folk to Kongros City that made themselves out to be greater than men may be. What happened to them who can say? For it was long ago. Without doubt the green gods seated in the city are the true gods, worn by time though they be; and above all let the traveller abase himself before the beggars there, and humble himself before them; for who may say what they are or whence they come?

Regarding "The Golden Doom", a critic said in London that it was death to touch the iron door and yet a lot of people touched it. There might be something in that but not much I think. The children of course are ignored — the play hinges on that — and after all someone must open the door for the King, and his retinue accompanies him, but better not let any unauthorized person touch it unnecessarily, for it would be a pity to kill a good actor just for the sake of realism.

Even as I went out of my quarters, five minutes ago, after writing this, I saw eight squads drilling on the parade ground and two children right in the middle trying to dig with sticks and no one saying a word to them, so I know that my "Golden Doom" is true to life. But after all it is easy to be true to life when one writes of man and the dreams of man, and not of some particular set of fashions in dress or catchwords that may be regarded as being untrue to all time.

Yours very sincerely, Dunsany.

Stuart Walker to Lord Dunsany
October 2, 1916.

My dear Lord Dunsany:

Your letters of mid-August were forwarded to me at Wyoming. They had been despoiled of their seals but no black pencil or heedless shears had laid the contents waste. I have a very serious quarrel, because I am quite sure one of my letters and several bits of printed matter never reached you. Many months ago I sent my message to you whose work has said so much to me, and I told you then what I thought of "The Golden Doom" and what

I hoped for “The Gods of the Mountain”, and “King Argimenes.” America did not know you so well then. Now I take pride in telling you that even the salesmen in the bookshops know your name, the names of your books — even those reported out of print — and have their individual way of pronouncing everything. Many of them have friends who know you, and these friends come back like travellers past Marma with their wonder tales and pronunciations. You are variously called *Dun*’ *sany, Doon sah ny, Dun sa ny, Dun san y*, author of *Ar gim i nez, Ar gi mee neez, Argi me nez,* I myself have chosen the pronunciation of Argimenes — the *ar* as in are, the *gi* as in give, s as z — There! the eternal pedagogue is showing beneath my youth, I fear; but I call Argimenes what I do call him because I think he would like it, even though *he* had another way.

We had our public dress rehearsals of “The Golden Doom” and “The Gods of the Mountain” at Wyoming. And here is where I should like to tell you what these curtains opening on the realization of my dream meant to me; but I cannot. I have not your words to picture intangible things. I can tell you only that I was very happy to see in my own little theatre what I know to be a great work. “The Golden Doom” was remarkable and its effect upon the audience was indescribable. The scene you know. Under the lights it was impressive. But now that you have told me what you think of schoolrooms may I confess that Mr. Zimmerer did use Assyrian and Babylonian designs but with less attempt at accuracy than I led you to believe. The Sentries were very good. I had already made them very human sentries before your letter came, not because I have known raw man through time and space, as you have, but because I have known him from the Gulf of Mexico to the Great Lakes and from a Louisiana hamlet to New York. The children are *young.* They are played without strain by charming people who give the illusion of innocence and wonder. The King and his Chamberlain are impressive and the Prophets with their cloaks are joys. When they make the sign to the stars — laying the backs of their right hands horizontally against their foreheads they disclose a great flat jewel in the palm of the hand. The spies, who are usually played as jumping jacks, are very skillfully played in all seriousness. Comedy is so near the surface of life that it can find its way without the forcing tried by most directors. And “The Golden Doom” is life to me. I introduce music twice. When the King orders a sacrifice to be made, an attendant bears the order to the nearest temple and presently a stringed instrument strangely played (a

bronze gong and a torn-torn mark the rhythm) is heard. After the order is rescinded the musician plucks a dirge faintly, for have the priests not donned their black cloaks? The audience was deeply impressed. But I have always known it was a great play.

I cannot write so surely of "The Gods of the Mountain" because I am playing Agmar and my judgment is that of the actor who feels the audience during the play and hears the verdict afterward. Evidently however the audience understood you. They laughed at the right time, and what is better still, they shuddered at the right time and cheered when the final curtains closed. I have taken two liberties in the first act. Will you send your approval quickly? The curtains open after a moment of music that tells of the East. The mottled wall, the copper domes of Kongros, and green Marma piercing the sky in the distance, are visible in the bright sunlight. Ulf, penurious and suspicious, Oogno, the gluttonous and care free, and Thahn, the inefficient and wheezy, are seated under the wall. An old water bearer passes by, then a dromedary man. A moment later a fat woman singing a song which the successful beggars imitate goes into the city but offers no alms. A snake-charmer passes — oh, but her dress is a marvel of white and orange and red — she drops one of her snakes into fat Oogno's bowl. Agmar followed by his one eyed retainer enters; Agmar in purple rags, and the other in black that has been fastened together at strategical points by pink which he must have stolen in Ackara. I have Mian brought on the first act. He is little, inefficient, young, and speechless, but he makes the seventh beggar. The end of the first act shows the seven beggars. They put the green raiment underneath their rags. Agmar lines them up, looks them over, shows them the attitude of the gods once more and takes his place at the head of the column. The curtains close as the beggars disappear into the city.... Of course I have not added any lines, but the business holds very well.

In the second act I have made the character whose child is bitten by a death adder a mother. I think the scene gains in pathos and prepares somewhat more effectively for the third act which is tremendous. I have had the thrones made so that they are palpably imitation and this seems to add to the impressiveness of the final picture, when the fearful citizens have slunk away leaving the seven stone beggars to themselves: in the distance green Marma pierces a blue night sky.... Mr. Arthur Farwell, one of our best American composers, has done the music for "The Gods of the Mountain" and his grasp of your story is excellent.

We have not yet put “King Argimenes” into the scene, but it is going very well in rehearsal. Mr. Harry Gilbert is writing the music for this, and the tear song and the wine song are promising. I think in fact that you would be highly pleased with what we are doing.

Our season opens Oct. 23rd at Springfield, Massachusetts, and for five weeks we play in the East in the larger cities — on November 27th we open in New York at the 39th Street Theatre which is really well arranged for your performances. Our opening bill will in all likelihood consist of “The Golden Doom”, “Nevertheless”, “The Flame Man”, and my own “Six Who Pass While the Lentils Boil.” On Thursday and Saturday mornings of the first week we shall play for children — and what an audience they will make! I use a prologue for some of my own plays and with your permission I am going to make him speak some of your lines before “The Golden Doom.” Of course I shall submit the lines to you for approval. I want to open the performance in New York with a prologue to the Theatre, a copy of which I enclose. Then the Prologue of the plays will speak a few words: if no news spreader were listening I should call them *mood* words. These prologues were liked last season very much. Such lines as your “Come with me, ladies and gentlemen who are in any wise weary of London (may I substitute *the City* for London?) come with me: and those that tire at all of the world we know; for we have new worlds here.”

Haven’t you some new plays that I can see?

With every good wish —

Stuart Walker.

Lord Dunsany to Stuart Walker

Ebrington Barracks, Londonderry, Ireland.

Oct. 26.

My dear Mr. Walker:

I have looked forward for a long time to hearing from you again and was delighted this morning to find your letter of Oct. 2. It is delightful to find somebody just going ahead with my play without asking if it is What The Public Wants (as though the Public had irrevocably decided just what it

wants forever), if the audience will understand it, — and generally muddling round.

Well, to answer your letter bit by bit, first of all the one way that nobody should pronounce my name is the way people do who call it *Dun' sa ny,* for pretty as the dactyl is it is not a dactyl. Those who call it *Doon-sahny* have every right to do so, for since it is the name of an Irish place one can hardly blame people for pronouncing it in an old Irish unanglicized manner. I don't know, about the *Sahny,* but *Doon* is I believe a quite correct pronunciation of those circular things which in Ireland are usually spelt dun and which appear in London as don, from one of which my name evidently had its name. But as a matter of fact I pronounce it *Dun sa ny,* with the accent on the second syllable which is pronounced as *say,* the first syllable rhyming with gun. To come to a much more important matter you are right about *Argi meen eez,* the principle accent falling on the 3rd syllable, the *g* is hard, the *gi* as in give, and the whole arrangement of the word as in Artaxerxes.

The Censor will wonder who Argimenes (to spell him correctly) is, and why the hell it should matter how my name is pronounced in America.

No, it is impossible to substitute "the city" for "London" in my preface to "The Book of Wonder." It would upset the rhythm and make a sentence that I could never have written. Say "who are in any wise weary of *cities*" and you will be all right. Use the phrase as much as you like. Wall Street, if applicable, would sound splendid.

What you tell me of the way you are doing my plays makes me feel sure they will succeed, not only because of the way you are doing them, but because your letter makes me confident that their fortunes can safely be intrusted to you. —

I wish I could read each play to you once, for neither pen nor typist can say exactly where the stress is to fall, in spite of them the rhythm can be missed, and even in some cases they may not show clearly with what motive little words are said, while some appear to have significance where none is intended.

I wonder how the sentry will say "I would that I were swimming down the Gyshon, on the cool side, under the fruit trees." Sometimes my love of poetry overcomes the dramatist in me, and here and there are lines that I would like to hear said merely lyrically. If it be not blasphemous to mention his name while speaking of my own work I would say that Shakespeare had this fault: you read some such direction as, enter Two Murderers, and then

you read some pure ecstasy of verse as the ruffians come on talking perhaps about dawn in fairyland.

I should like the sentry who has that line of mine to say the words “on the cool side, under the fruit trees” just as the last part of a hexameter. After all the — poets are right, there is a meaning in rhythm though it lie too deep and is too subtle for us to reason out, or perhaps it lies like joy clear all over the surface of the world, and so is missed by ‘ our logic that goes burrowing blind like the mole, over whose head the buttercups blow unseen: that is the right explanation, not my first; nothing lies too deep that is essential to life, or who would live?

I turn to your letter again. A gong and a tomtom are a lovely idea, and a flat jewel in the palm of the hand! Of course that is just the place where people would wear large flat jewels who had never known manual labor and whose only business was to bless. You say I know the scenes; but I wish I did. I never saw a design of it although you described it to me.

So you are Agmar. That is good.

The water-bearer and the snake-charmer and all will be great additions. Instead of citizens, etc at the foot of the programme you might write “One who sells water, A charmer of snakes”, and so on. Instantly the audience will know that they are before the gates of a country where water has its price, and the charming of snakes is an occupation.

Do what you like with Ulf. To me he appeared a man who in the course of his years had learned something of what is due to the gods: it is he, and he alone, that hints at Nemesis, and at the last he openly proclaims it—” (my fear) shall go from me crying like a dog from out a doomed city.”

A play writes itself out of one’s experience of life, going back even further than one can remember, and even, I think, into inherited memories. Our slow perceptions and toilsome reasoning can never keep pace with any work of art, and if I could tell you for certain the exact source and message of “The Gods of the Mountain” I could tell you also from what storms and out of what countries came every drop of the spring that is laughing out of the hill.

Therefore I only suggest that Ulf plays as it were the part of a train bearer to the shadow of some messenger from the gods. —

Oct. 26.

This letter has been lying about for some time so I had better send it off though your letter is but half answered.

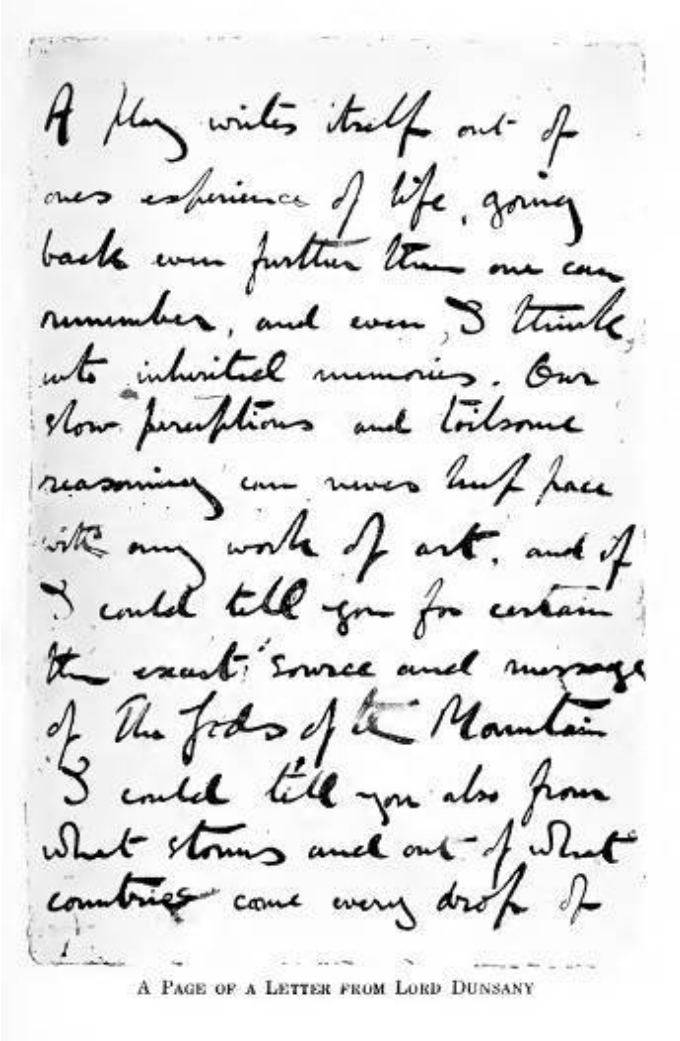
Do send me photographs or designs of scenes, as many as you can, and Lady Dunsany would very-much like to have the music for the piano. Thus I shall be able to hear it, or at least an echo of it; she would also very much like to see the photographs.

I do not expect to go to the front before the middle of December.

I wish you the best of luck with your own plays and for your venture with mine. You are one of the prophets of my gods. In all history I know of no tale of a god without any prophet; that would be too sad even for history. May my gods protect you from the following, who stoned the prophets so often of old time and stone them still — they sweat and pant, for they have stoned for so many centuries, their hands are cut by the lifting of many flints, still they stone on, lest ever the prophets should live, they deem it a holy duty: —

Ignorance Apathy Empty Frivolity Fashion and many another begotten by the third upon the fourth. And so farewell.

Dunsany.



A Page of a Letter from Lord Dunsany

Stuart Walker to Lord Dunsany
November 5, 1916.

My dear Lord Dunsany:

My intention was to write you immediately after the first performance of "The Golden Doom" and "The Gods of the Mountain" but when I tell you that we have played 65 plays in 12 cities during the past two weeks you may understand my delay.

"The Golden Doom" was first performed on Tuesday Oct. 24th in Hartford Conn, and we have given five performances of it in the two weeks.

It has made a very deep impression both with newspaper men and the public at large. When I have a moment to sit down and sort out my papers I shall send you some clippings. In one you will notice that the writer appreciates the youngness of the children. I do not generally approve of having a girl play a boy's part, but Miss Rogers creates a most happy illusion, and this saves me from using my very remarkable Gregory Kelly in the part. He is somewhat too tall. I am more in love with your beautiful play than ever and it is to be used in the opening bill in New York City on Nov. 27th. Unfortunately, there are no photographs yet, because we have been moving about so feverishly and rapidly, that we cannot take time to set up a play especially for the photographer.

"The Gods of the Mountain" had its first performance at Mount Holyoke, *and it is a great play*. I shall send you photographs of myself as Agmar, and Mr. Kelly as Slag and several of the beggars. In playing Agmar, I have made him a man who would have been a great man if he had just been one step further advanced in understanding. Several of my friends have disagreed with me in not making him a physically powerful man. I am quite tall, being six feet and quite slender, and as you will see from the costume, I accentuate both the height and the slenderness of the man, and there are moments when I allow him to develop a real light in his eye, that is, the light that could shine through the ages if it were allowed to shine.

I am quite gratified that every notice has spoken of the final effect in the play when the seven beggars have turned to green stone and in the distance green Marma cleaves a deep blue sky. Enthusiasm at the end of this scene has been uniformly gratifying.

"King Argimenes" is to have its first performance next Friday November the 10th in Pittsburg.

On account of the small size of the Portmanteau stage I have had a very difficult problem in the first act of suggesting great space, and finally succeeded in obtaining the desired effect I think. Instead of using your suggestion — the flat Darniak Slave Fields — I have used the side of a hill which Darniak mentions in the second act. All that the audience sees is the grass covered slope of the hill and into this has been cut a deep impressive trench, and in this trench are Argimenes and Zarb. The whole act is dull in color and depressive. In the second act, however, Mr. Zimmerer indulged himself in the most vivid colorings that we have on the Portmanteau stage. The entire stage is draped in black curtains. On a black dais is placed the

Throne of Darniak. This throne seat is built out of elephant tusks. The back ones are seven feet high curving high over Darniak's head, and the ivory is inlaid in places with vermilion and blue jewels. The seat of the throne is a vermilion cushion and immediately back of the throne is a great green circle, and running down the steps is a broad green crape which is laid on a black floor. To the right sits Illuriel. He is a marvelous creation in ivory, gold and vermilion, and he sits with oriental calmness on an agate column. On the other side of the throne stands an hour glass through which vermilion sand is slowly running, and this stands on top of a gold globe which in turn rests upon a vermilion standard. Darniak himself wears a black robe and seated on the steps at his feet is dark haired Atharlia in orange and red. The blonde Oxara is in lavender and white and silver. The feline Cahafra is in light blue and white and her hair is red. The tragic Thragolind is in gray and blue. I think you would like the Queens.

Just one more suggestion about "The Gods of the Mountain." In the third act I have had the thrones built so that they are palpably imitative. Am I right in doing this? The altar in the second act is a great block of agate standing on ivory legs. It is really a wonderful piece of stage furniture.

Very truly yours, Stuart Walker.

Stuart Walker to Lord Dunsany
December 24, 1916.

My dear Lord Dunsany:

First let me thank you for the photograph which your uncle delivered to me. It is the pleasantest sort of assurance that the strange man shown in the article in the Boston Transcript was not you.

Our season in New York has proved more successful than I had hoped and we are now advertising our sixth week. It is unfortunate that we cannot stay longer because just the people to whom we want to appeal are finding us and sending their friends to see us. This resulted in good houses last week which is notoriously the worst week in the theatrical year. "King Argimenes" made a deep impression and so with "Gammer Gurton" and my own anonymous dramatization of "The Birthday of the Infanta" it will remain in the bill all the week. The critics have for once united in praise of

my theatre and in the color and form of “King Argimenes” they forgot to say that the theatre is small.



Photo by J. M. Cummings. Courtesy of Portmanteau Theater

KING ARGIMENES AND THE UNKNOWN WARRIOR
Argimenes at last mounts the throne of Darniak

“The Gods of the Mountain” has probably had its last performance here for this season because I think I see my way clear to produce it on a large scale next season. We have already played it in New York 16 times — a very fine record for a repertory company. We have played “The Golden Doom” 11 times. Of course when we return next season we shall repeat them. They are plays that I want to keep in my repertory for years and years to come, for despite the statement of the Sun critic that they are little plays, and the Mail man that you do not care much about the theatre or what becomes of your plays — he says you dabble in them as amateur poets

dabble with the magazines — I am inclined to the certainty that your three plays will live as long as I live in the theatre, and ages beyond that.

"King Argimenes" strangely enough builds beautifully from the scene between Argimenes and Zarb to the finale of the second act when Argimenes decked in a robe of cloth of gold, mounts to the step of the throne and turns majestically before the ivory throne to order the burial of the late king. There has never been a suggestion of loss of tension in the second act. Not even during the scene of the queens and the prophet does the audience forget the crouching Argimenes who stole from the dark trench in the preceding act to kill the guard. After the queens leave the stage in the second act, I have the scene darkened to suggest a lapse of time. Then in a half light broken now and then by a gleam of torches, the rest of the play is done. When Darniak rushes in from the chamber of banquets to see Illuriel cast down I have the queens follow him and it is their voices that first take up the wail "Illuriel is fallen." Besides their long-robed figures stealing in terror from the throne room are much more impressive than men's figures would be in the half light.

Both Mr. Zimmerer and Mr. Farwell are very slow with their work for you. If I were to send you the score of the music as it is written for the harp, violin, and cello, I wonder if Lady Dunsany could use it? The photographs will suggest the scenes to you, but I am eager to have you see the color. I wish I could bring my whole model to you. Perhaps I shall be able to do so some day within the days of my youth. With every good wish for the New Year and new years, Stuart Walker.

Fragment of a letter from Lord Dunsany You ask me about my interpretation of "The Queen's Enemies." Well, it is the only play of mine yet acted in which the entire theme did not arise in my own mind; usually the whole country of the play with its kings and queens and customs arises there too. But the theme of "The Queen's Enemies" I owe to a lady, and not one of those dreamy women who, having got an idea, write a sonnet about it or a play: she did it; she got the motive of drowning her enemies, so she invited them to dinner and drowned them. That is all I know about her.

It was not only easier but more amusing to imagine her character and all the names of her enemies than to be bothered with reading about her. And, since she was a live woman, whenever the Sixth Dynasty was thriving in Egypt, I think she came a little more alive out of my fancy than she might have done out of some dusty book. I mention this lady in order to show that

the story is not only a very simple one, but so simple that it actually worked, and worked, I believe, very nicely.

If there is a moral in the play, I trust that neither you nor any other lady who has had anything to do with the play will "profit by" the moral, for I do not consider it at all right to give a dinner party and then drown your guests.

The Queen of my play was, of course, an unusual character, but it is not entirely unique. She is self-centered. Enemies annoy her. It is natural to get rid of them.

Is this not a little like the All Highest? If she had been him, she would have said, quite sincerely: "Woe to all that dare to draw the sword against me. God is undoubtedly with me."

But, of course, I wasn't thinking of any Kaisers when I wrote the play. I wrote it before the war.

I wrote it in a wood near here (Dunsany Castle) toward the end of April in 1913.

But it's curious what a fitting consort she would have made for the Inca of Perusalem.

She is sincere when she prays to the Nile. And I think that "The" Kaiser was sincere when he spoke of God, and gave orders for things to be done in Belgium that Ackazarpses' mistress would never have sunk to.

As for teaching people, I only wish for them what I wish for myself, that they might escape from all the dull facts and equally dull lies that they are daily being taught by journalists, politicians, owners of encyclopaedias, and manufacturers of ugly things. While they still have power to be disgusted by the modern advertisement, let them come and see my plays; they shall trace the sources of my inspirations and rejoice with me in the pleasant rhythm of words; when knavery and ugliness seem natural, *it is too late.*

Lord Dunsany to E. H. Bierstadt Ebrington Barracks, Londonderry, Ireland.

April 9th, 1917 Dear Mr. Bierstadt:

My name will probably sound faintly familiar to you, but such big things have been happening in America on or about April 8th that I expect my name there now to evoke the comment that it evokes in England (except in the London Library where they haven't heard of me at all), which is "Didn't he write something some time or something of that sort?" Only that in your case you'll be saying, "Didn't *I* write something?" In any case the great Dunsany boom is about due to be followed by the great Dunsany slump.

Well, I think "The Gods of the Mountain" should survive it, and if "The Glittering Gate" doesn't, so much the better. "Argimenes" is an imperfect play, but Stuart Walker seems to like it for its good points in spite of its faults. To place my plays in order of merit when some have not been acted is difficult, particularly when some are fresher in one's mind than others, but I think that this is the order in which they will come:

1. Alexander 2. The Laughter of the Gods 3. The Gods of the Mountain and after that I don't know, for I would always give preference to any play about the country of my spirit over some comedy whose scene was London or even a Yorkshire Inn. But I have a 3-act comedy called "The Ginger Cat" which I have hopes of. They were going to act it in London, but the war knocked all that.

The books that you kindly sent us have arrived today, and I have begun to make a few notes as you asked me. I am very much obliged to you for the interest you have taken in my work, all the more so because — whatever America, Russia, or Posterity may say — I am an unknown writer. Not that I have not always known where to find enthusiasm, and given generously with both hands, but given by few. Yet, after all, what do numbers matter?

I have lately found time in spite of soldiering to write in the afternoons, chiefly between four and six. I have been writing on March 29th and 30th, and on April 4th, 5th, 6th, and 7th. With more leisure I should have done it in fewer days, but I have done two one-act plays, both comedies, one short, the other long. There are 3 characters in one, and 6 in the other, and of these 9 characters 8 are mortal, so that you see I am rather getting away from my usual themes.

Now I will end, though I have much to say, and will make notes in your book as you ask me, and one day will send it on its slow way back to America.

If the characters in my books could write to me as this character in your book is writing to you — what queer letters I should get.

Yours very sincerely, Dunsany.

Lord Dunsany to E. H. Bierstadt
Ebrington Barracks, Londonderry.

July 23rd, 1917.

Dear Mr. Bierstadt:

I was very glad indeed to hear from you. Such letters as I get from America are my only links with civilization. We have not the leisure here to attend to the affairs of civilization. It is quite right that we should not. The recumbent figure of Civilization must first of all be defended: afterwards, when barbarism has been driven away from her, we shall have leisure to attempt to restore her to animation.

I am rather hopeful of the future; for those who have seen war have seen one of the real and mighty things, and this should be such a touchstone all their lives by which to test the false and the trivial that managers and publishers may not find it so easy in the future to make money by false pretences. It is even possible that had I never been under shell fire I should have been unable to conceive anything of the size of the climax in "The Gods of the Mountain."

"As a writer of plays we think that Lord Dunsany is not seen at his best. His dialogues are rather tedious, his plots are thin, and his dramatic situations are wanting in grip. Neither they ('The Laughter of the Gods' and 'The Queen's Enemies') nor the two plays that follow them ('The Tents of the Arabs' and 'A Night at an Inn') are distinguished by any outstanding qualities. The frequent repetition of words and phrases in the first three plays reminds one of Maeterlinck — there is a great deal of palaver and very little result... with really good acting 'A Night at an Inn' might be interesting." *The Outlook* — London.

"It is a literary pleasure to read these trifles."

The Belfast News Letter.

That is the kind of reviews I get in this country, not because they dislike my work at all, but because of the inviolate English custom that no poet shall be welcomed until he is dead.

I am sorry to say that I am not fit to go to the front just yet as I have had five attacks of tonsillitis since I was in Belgium, but I have had that put right now and should be quite fit again inside a month.

To come to America and meet you, and many other friends is a day dream with which I often cheer my mind. Indeed my longing to go there was no doubt a large ingredient of the mood out of which I wrote "The Old King's Tale", a play which Stuart Walker has. My wife, who is a very good

judge, likes this play best of all my plays except “Alexander”, though I put it fourth, about level with “The King of the Golden Isles”, after “The Gods of the Mountain,” with “The Laughter of the Gods” second.

When I have come to America, and after I have seen and talked with you all, and after I have seen and rejoiced in the hospitality that your theaters have extended to my dreams, then I want to do what may seem odd in a playwright. I want to get away into some of your mountains or big woods and go after bears or any other large game, for I prefer this even to the Theater. I have rather a nice collection of heads that I have shot in different countries, and which I hope to show you some day, for ships go both ways across the Atlantic. Of course I should have to find out before going after heads where was the right place to go, for there are right places and wrong places for that sort of thing all over the world, and there are guides who are anxious to show you one, and guides who are as ready to show you the other. I remember one of the wrong guides once in one of the wrong places who was going to show me a wolf: we went out at night and lay near a dead donkey, my guide pointed to the exact spot on the sky-line just before us by which the wolf would come: “Wolf he come down like a mountain.” he said. When after two or three failures he wanted me to come again, and I asked him if he could guarantee a wolf, he reproached me by summing up the uncertainties of this sport with the words, “Wolf he come from God”: an unjust reproach, since only a few nights earlier he had sworn in a cheerfuller mood, “Wolf he come, hyena he come, lion he come, everything he come.” But that was a long time ago, and I have learned better to discriminate guides since then.

I am aware of the irony of making plans for the future in these days, but I make them none the less. I am sorry a censor spoiled the seal on my last letter, but I suppose it can’t be helped.

The insect under your microscope, Dunsany.

APPENDICES

IN a recent communication, Lord Dunsany commented upon the quotation I made from his essay on “Romance and the Modern Stage” to this effect: “I think I have expressed myself far better in a speech to The Poets’ Club at a dinner they gave me in London in July, 1912, printed the following autumn in the *English Review,* the same number that had Masefield’s ‘Dauber’, I forget which.” Unfortunately I had overlooked this speech, and I now take occasion to repair the damage done, if any, by reproducing it in full. As Lord Dunsany seems to consider it in some sense an apologia, a summary of his views on poets and poetry, as well as a castigation of the present age, it may be considered of value quite aside from its intrinsic merit. For my own part I do not feel that, fine as it is, it is possessed of that rare quality which marks the essay on “Romance and the Modern Stage” so unquestionably Dunsany’s own. This, however, is purely a matter of opinion, and I must apologize for intruding mine here; doubtless the reader will disagree with me. As the confession of faith of a great poet, “Nowadays” is a memorable piece of work, both in itself, and in the light it throws upon its author.

APPENDIX I.

NOWADAYS

(Dedicated to the Poets' Club)

I WILL ask the reader to approach with me in fancy any great city. Let us suppose the open country to be already behind us, a sombre look has come upon the sky, a trodden look on the grass; the air has the look of brooding over some regrettable thing; the hoardings, always ugly, always false, often indecent, which have been with us all day into distant wolds, multiply here, and suddenly the mean streets rush on us. And how terrible is their meanness. The poorest cottager beyond in the country, the remote dweller in tents, even houseless wanderers, may turn at any moment, however hard their lot, to the hills, the wild wind, the heath, to something that is not in itself base, but is part of a scheme in which the stars themselves have part. But in a town! The night is a glare of factories, and the day an asset. And night and day they are reading, reading, reading — children and grown men always reading, whether they will or not. Reading, reading, reading, till they hardly even know that they read any longer. And what do they read? All that is basest. All the mean, cunning words of the advertiser praising his poisonous wares which no Government dare put down because they know that the power of the fraudulent cure is too great to be attacked either with safety or remunerative applause. So the poster stands unchecked, the literature of a people; stands in this den of man, the modern factory city, a record of man's ambition.

Surely as one looks at all these things one's mind is on a high, dangerous place, with the gulfs of pessimism all black beneath it. It is then that one turns to the poets. One sees the holy traditions, the cloak of Homer being passed reverently on. I hear them say that there are no poets nowadays, and I listen respectfully to that judgment whenever I hear men utter it, for it is no less awful a thing than judgment upon themselves. It means that they are all alone without an interpreter. For how can one view and understand so old a thing as life or so new and strange a thing as this varying age, so full of machinery and politics, without the help of those rare minds that look, without reeling, upon essential things?

There are only two ways of understanding life: we could do it ourselves no doubt if we had the time, but threescore years and ten are not long enough; nor is the time long enough, though one add to that span twenty or twenty-five of those extra years that the Psalmist says are all labour and sorrow. There are only two ways of understanding life: one is to find some ancient folk, some age-old peasantry, and borrow from the storehouse of their wisdom which they have had leisure to fill while wars and earthquakes troubled the thrones and citadels of kings. I never hear a nursery rhyme nor an old saying but it comes to me in this age, that trade and politics have made so sordid, like a little cool breeze into a stifling town out of some far, quiet hills. And the only other way of which I know to come at the meaning of life and the scheme of man is to turn to the poets. No man in his lifetime indeed can understand it, and I do not think that any poet would claim to or would pretend to know more than any other man; but then at moments unknown, always unexpected, there comes that clear voice in his mind, and with a feeling surely of ignorance and of awe he finds himself speaking of cities he has known and byways he has trod in lands where the desert has long since covered all, coming back again to its own, where the historian can only guess and the traveller durst not go. He speaks of things that were before cities began, and of gods that walked with him in the prime of the stars. The voice passes (like the wind in the gospel of John), and he is only a man again, with a man's humiliations.

It seems to me that in some way beyond our understanding the poet, in the depth of his experience and the wide range of his knowledge, is to be compared with the many generations of a whole people rather than with individuals; and the final product of the culture of man seems to be little more than a return to a certain simplicity that was long since.

Never, as in this time it seems to me, have we so much needed guidance from the poets; for eighty years machinery has altered and increased, changing and changing again the face of England, changing our habits, our needs, our mode of life, our thoughts, our language, and our very selves. We are very proud of it, we boast of it, we are glad that we have changed quicker than others change; and what is it all for? — where are we going? I have not seen the answers in the Press; there is no clue to it in the Palace of Westminster; they do not know in either House of Parliament.

And the poets go on writing as of old. Sometimes they write of high ethereal things that are as far from us as the gates of the dawn, like that

remote, unplaced, undated play, Yeats' *King's Threshold;* and sometimes they write about our daily affairs, as in Masefield's *Widow in Bye Street.* And in the one case I hear men and women say, "Yes, I would read poetry if only poets would write about the things that interest us, the things of our own time." And in the other case they say, "It is too sordid; a poet should not write of such sordid things." Thus they speak when the poet's mothwinged fancy flits down to the very fields that they themselves, the people of this age, have slimed and made foul with gold.

And if we do not hear them, if the fashion is to be mending oleographs that the jigsaw hath eaten and not reading poetry, whence, then, shall we get our wisdom? We are removed, so terribly removed and utterly cut off, from all the simple peoples of the earth, that it is not from them that we shall learn our destiny. He would shift his pipe in his mouth if we asked one of them, and look long in front of him before he spoke; for there is no hurry in the rural places where things have gone easily, but for winter and war, since ever the quiet folk came there far back in the story of Time; he would be silent perhaps for a while before he answered, and then would speak with an accent so unfamiliar and words so unlike those hallowed only this morning by the latest editions of the daily Press that we might find something whimsical in such a man, and smile and turn away; so may Adam and Eve, as they left the garden, have found something a little uncouth in the angel's speech. Yet it seems to me, as I watch the glare of our factories, or hear the roar of our towns and the sound going up from Progress upon her ravenous path, it seems to me that man has sailed out of his course and is steering by bad stars. And the terrible evil of it is this: that the further he goes, the harder it becomes for him to hear any voice that calls him back. I mean that this recent redundancy and elaboration of speech, of which an example is the ridiculous spectacle of modern Cabinet Ministers standing up and saying, "The answer is in the affirmative," when all they mean is "Yes" — those pompous and meaningless phrases that eke out sixpence for the needy journalist when all he had to say would fill one line at a penny; and, final horror of all, the language of the advertisement begotten of avarice and bred in America: all this so rots the mind that true and simple things come to seem false, and men no longer hear when the poet speaks. That is not the concern of the poet. It is not for him to find hearers, not for him to get wealth or ease or applause of men. It is not for him to ask why the message came to himself while other men may rest, nor even to ask whence it came,

nor for what end. It is for him to work on with that flame in the mind which is the bane and blessing of the inspired. Time will bring readers — in ten years one or two, in twenty years ten or a dozen, then in a decade a hundred, then a thousand, ten thousand in ten years more, and some day millions; and still Time goes on, nor stops because we cease to imagine his progress, and the day comes when every child on the earth has perhaps one little fancy in its mind that its forbears got from the dreams of that neglected poet, which have become the world's inheritance.

"But," they will say to me, "the poet is dead." What is that to the poet? It is not for any reward that may be put into live hands that the poet works. Who knows for whom his inspiration was sent? Who knows to what end? Perhaps to guide the kings of some far-future age; and perhaps the poet is picked out from all other men as a punishment for some sin committed in other lands long, long ago, which the stars still remember.

They think that because they do not heed the poets they are right upon the course that they have chosen, right to make money by false patriotism and poisonous bread and adulterated wine, and that the poets are wrong. But the poets are never wrong, never have erred in the history of the world, have only failed (how many times they know) to give the message, but their inspiration comes sheer from the Palace of Truth, and what they say is beautiful is so, so long as they are true to their inspiration, and what they say is damnable is already damned in heaven. They reflect what is as lakes reflect it. Can a lake reflect three trees when there are only two, or can a white bird swimming on it seem black, or a crooked branch seem straight? They cannot be wrong, for they weave their work of sincerity, beauty, and truth; and evil days are in store for those prosperous cities that turn away from these things. Let them work on; it is not for them to find readers. But when the poet comes to an age that will not heed his words, let him shake off that dust that is flesh and pass hence; let him go back whither he has come; and not in the day of judgment only shall it be better for Sodom and Gomorrah than for that age, but in its own time its own people shall eke out their own damnation — for what is it to hate poetry? It is to have no little dreams and fancies, no holy memories of golden days, to be unmoved by serene midsummer evenings or dawn over wild lands, singing or sunshine, little tales told by the fire a long while since, glow-worms and briar-rose; for of all these things and more is poetry made. It is to be cut off for ever from the fellowship of great men that are gone; to see men and women

without their haloes and the world without its glory; to miss the meaning lurking behind common things, like elves hiding in flowers; it is to beat one's hands all day against the gates of Fairyland, and to find that they are shut and the country empty and its kings gone hence.

Perhaps I have drawn something too grim a picture. Certain it is that poetry does not pay, and certain that many judge it for this reason and find poetry wanting. Yet no bad custom endures for very long or survives the laughter of posterity, and I think there are signs already of changes coming. It is not wonderful that for one or two generations (and how short are one or two generations in the long, long story of Man), it is not wonderful that for a little while we have turned Materialists: matter has been so marvellous. No record in the histories of the world shows any age in which matter has done such astounding things as in the last hundred years — that is to say, matter to the glory of matter, and matter exulting in material things. I do not think that a motor or great factory is any more wonderful than the cathedrals of England, or Notre Dame or St. Mark's, or those tremendous dreams of bygone kings that marble and granite have realised in Egypt; but matter is subservient to the spirit in these. Never before to-day has it been so great for its own sake. What will it be to-morrow? Shall we always go on toiling and blackening our sky to make machines ever more wonderful still, or shall we not turn from matter because it has failed us? It has had its turn, we have worshipped it all these many years; it has given us swiftness; Man can move now by mono-rail at a hundred miles an hour, and it is not fast enough — all the old troubles, old cares, old sicknesses keep pace with us: aye, and the new diseases and new cares too. Is it not time to turn away from it? Our triumph over matter has been matter's triumph over us, and, like a great antagonist, matter cares not that we think we have won the game that we have lost. Look at us after our triumph; look at the stunted figures of the Midlands; look at the careworn faces; look at the full and terrible asylums every year growing fuller; look at the feeble, frantic politicians trying to soothe blind, angry, inarticulate labour. Man is become so very, very wise, has so closely studied the papers; he is as wise as some old and learned professor caught in a crowd and not knowing which way to turn.

The soul is not soothed by a hundred miles an hour, the mind is not made easy in shops in Bond Street by four hundred and five hundred per cent, profits, nor yet may happiness be found for certain even by all the

wickedness of honoured and wealthy vendors of patent drugs and adulterated food. With such men as these last, money will always remain; but more and more every year I hope we may find men turning away towards simplicity and beauty, realising that though money *may* buy happiness, yet it is only a medium, while the poets have on sale in exchange for nothing those ideals, fancies, and phantasies out of which happiness is made. For not a penny is earned, not a thing done but it was to help to carry out some man's ambition to make some little fancy a little easier; and men's ambitions and men's fancies are the poet's raw material, and it is only short-sighted, unpractical millionaires that think that the stamped gold coins which they give their days in exchange for are at all an end in themselves, or that fail to see that that very happiness that they hope their money may buy is often thrown away for the sake of making that money. O all ye business men, praise ye money, for I sometimes think it is all you ever get. It may be that before we grow simpler and sincerer we may grow even worse. A substitute is yet to be found for water, as there has been for beer and salt; it is yet to be widely advertised, sold, and drunk like many another wickedness, but people must some day turn from all these things and go one by one to the camp where the good men dwell — not the poets only, but all who do work for its own sake and do it well. There are two great divisions among them, the true and the sham; I judge them by their works. In one class are all the snobs, all the pretenders, the writers of advertisements, the keepers of shops (except such as are honest), the makers of antique furniture and the buyers of it, the manufacturers of all things that are meant to look what they are not, the lovers of ugliness, not all the sinners, but all that sin meanly for the sake of gain, however honoured their stations. And in the other class are the men with spades, men near to the fields and natural like the harvests, soldiers and sailors, patriots, not politicians, common labourers, not labour-leaders, policemen, kings, and all (though happily the list is too long) who do any work well for the sake of the work, and not so as to sell it at an unjust price to the first ignorant customer. In this class are the poets. And this whole class should hold fast together to resist the false that is spreading over the world — false knowledge, false work, false food. The rough seafaring man may be ignorant of the poet, but they have the bond between them of work well done, which sets them utterly apart from the mean makers of cough-cures, and Cabinet Ministers answering in the affirmative.

And of such a class the poets should be the leaders; for of all materials for labour, dreams are the hardest, and the artificer in ideas is the chief of workers, who out of nothing will make a piece of work that may-stop a child from crying or lead nations to higher things. For what is it to be a poet? It is to see at a glance the glory of the world, to see beauty in all its forms and manifestations, to feel ugliness like a pain, to resent the wrongs of others as bitterly as one's own, to know mankind as others know single men, to know Nature as botanists know a flower, to be thought a fool, to hear at moments the clear voice of God.

Dunsany.

APPENDIX II.

THE casts given in the following pages are those of the first British and American productions. All the British productions were professional, but in America the Neighborhood Playhouse productions, and that of the Arts and Crafts Theater must be classed technically as amateur. From an artistic standpoint, however, they were entirely professional, especially the latter. This is a small point, but one worthy of attention, as Dunsany's work has become widely known in this country partially through the medium of the amateur stage. I have given the most notable of the amateur productions, and those only when there has been no professional production. Two productions of "The Gods of the Mountain" are mentioned for America, because the first was so entire a failure that most people have never even heard of it. There have been many other amateur productions of these plays to which attention has been called from time to time, but it is neither possible nor in the slightest degree necessary that they be listed.

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Christmas, The Neolith, The Shanachie, The Irish Review, The Forum, and *The Smart Set.* There remain scattered *Tales* which are as yet unpublished in book form.

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PRODUCTIONS

THE GLITTERING GATE

Produced under the direction of Mr. Norryes Connell, at the Abbey Theatre, Dublin, on April 29th, 1909, with the following cast:

JIM — *Mr. Fred O'Donovan* BILL — *Mr. Norryes Connell* When the production of the Abbey Theatre was carried to the Court Theatre, London, the part of *Bill* was acted by Mr. J. M. Kerrigan, who also played it at Manchester, when the company was on tour.

The first American production was made at the Neighborhood Playhouse, New York City, on March 6th, 1915. The scenery was designed by Mr. Warren Dahler and Miss Lois Phipps. The cast was:

JIM	*Mr. David Solomon*
BILL	*Mr. Max M. Kaplan*

Produced under the direction of Mr. Nugent Monck, at the Abbey Theatre, Dublin, on January 26th, 1911, with the following cast:

KING ARGIMENES . . .	*Mr. Fred O'Donovan*
ZARB	*Mr. J. M. Kerrigan*
THE KING'S OVERSEER .	*Mr. Ambrose Power*
AN OLD SLAVE . . .	*Mr. Fred Harford*
A YOUNG SLAVE . . .	*Mr. Brinsley MacNamara*
A PROPHET	*Mr. J. A. O'Rourke*
KING DARNIAK . . .	*Mr. Arthur Sinclair*
THE IDOL GUARD . . .	*Mr. Sydney J. Morgan*
THE SERVANT OF THE KING'S DOG	*Mr. Eric Gorman*
QUEEN OXARA	*Miss Maeve O'Donnell*
QUEEN ATHARLIA . . .	*Miss Sara Allgood*
QUEEN CAHAFRA . . .	*Miss Maire O'Neill*
QUEEN THRAGOLIND . .	*Miss Maire Nic Shiubhlaig*

The scenes and the costumes for this production were designed by Mr. Nugent Monck.

The first production in America was made by Mr. Stuart Walker in his Portmanteau Theater, in New York City, on December 18th, 1916, with scenery and costumes designed by Mr. Frank J. Zimmerer, and with the following cast:

KING ARGIMENES	*Mr. McKay Morris*
ZARB	*Mr. Gregory Kelly*
THE KING'S OVERSEER . .	*Mr. Lew Medbury*
AN OLD SLAVE	*Mr. Frank J. Zimmerer*
A YOUNG SLAVE	*Mr. Robert Cook*
A PROPHET	*Mr. Edgar Stehli*
KING DARNIAK	*Mr. Willard Webster*
THE IDOL GUARD	*Mr. Ward Thornton*
THE SERVANT OF THE KING'S DOG	*Miss Agnes Rogers*
QUEEN OXARA	*Miss Florence Wollersen*
QUEEN ATHARLIA	*Miss Gertrude Davis*
QUEEN CAHAFRA	*Miss Nancy Winston*
QUEEN THRAGOLIND . . .	*Miss Judith Lowry*

THE GODS OF THE MOUNTAIN

First produced at the Haymarket Theatre, London, on June 1st, 1911, with the following cast:

OOGNO	. . . . .	*Mr. E. A. Warburton*
THAHN	. . . . .	*Mr. Claude Rains*
ULF	. . . . .	*Mr. H. R. Hignett*
AGMAR	*Beggars* . .	*Mr. Charles V. France*
SLAG	. . . . .	*Mr. Charles Maude*
A THIEF	. . . . .	*Mr. Lawrence Hanray*
MLAN	. . . . .	*Mr. R. P. Lamb*

OORANDER	. . . .	*Mr. J. Dickson Kenwin*
AKMOS	. . . .	*Mr. Ernest Graham*
ILLANAUN	. . . .	*Mr. Grindon Bentley*
BASHARA	. . . .	*Mr. F. G. Clifton*
THULEK	. . . .	*Mr. G. Carr*
THOHARMAS	. . . .	*Mr. Kenneth Dennys*
HAZ	*Citizens* .	*Mr. B. Hatton Sinclair*
THEEDES	. . . .	*Mr. A. Jones*
LIRRA	. . . .	*Miss Anne Carew*
ESELUNZA	. . . .	*Miss E. Risdon*
THONION ALARA	. . . .	*Miss V. Whitaker*
YLAX	. . . .	*Miss M. Ronsard*
ACKARNEES	. . . . .	*Mr. Norman Page*
A DROMEDARY MAN	. . .	*Mr. W. Black*
NENNEK OF THE MEADOWS	.	*Miss Enid Rose*
THE OTHERS	. . . . .	*Mr. E. Lyall Swete* *Mr. A. Ackerman* *Mr. K. Black* *Mr. H. Cooper* *Mr. E. Leverett* *Mr. G. Wilkinson* *Mr. J. O'Brien*

The scenery was designed and painted by Mr. Walter Bayes, with the exception of the first set, for which designs were made by Mr. S. H. Sime.

The first American production was made by Mr. W. A. Brady, in the Teck Theater in Buffalo, New York, on April 8th, 1912, with the following cast. With the exception of the cast the production was identical with the one at the Haymarket.

OOGNO	. . .	*Mr. George Schaeffer*
THAHN	. . .	*Mr. Worthington Romaine*
ULF	. . .	*Mr. William McVay*
AGMAR	*Beggars*	*Mr. Cyril Scott*
SLAG	. . .	*Mr. M. T. McQuarrie*
A THIEF	. . .	*Mr. W. J. Gros*
MLAN	. . .	*Mr. Sage Bennett*
OORANDER	. . .	*Mr. Edwin Cushman*
AKMOS	. . .	*Mr. Harry Cowley*
ILLANAUN	. . .	*Mr. Dallas Anderson*
BASHARA	. . .	*Mr. William Levis*
THULEK	. . .	*Mr. Arthur Bentley*
THOHARMAS	*Citizens*	*Mr. Louis Meers*
HAZ	. . .	*Mr. William Henderson*
THEEDES	. . .	*Mr. James Hogan*
LIRRA	. . .	*Miss Mabelle Maybourne*
ESELUNZA	. . .	*Miss Susan Daniels*
THONION ALARA	. . .	*Miss Frances Savage*
YLAX	. . .	*Miss May Sunderman*
ACKARNES FROM THE DESERT		*Mr. Rockcliffe Fellowes*
FIRST DROMEDARY MAN		*Mr. Edwin F. Thompson*
SECOND DROMEDARY MAN		*Mr. Edgar Stehli*
NENNEK OF THE MEADOWS		*Miss Mona Morgan*
THE OTHERS		*Mr. Charles Duff* *Mr. Ackerman* *Mr. C. Black* *Mr. L. Darcy* *Mr. William Carmichael* *Mr. F. Levison* *Mr. James Murphy*

Mr. Brady presented "The Gods of the Mountain" upon the evenings of April 8th, 9th, and 10th, in Buffalo, and in the Shubert Theater, Rochester, New York, upon the 11th, 12th, and 13th, after which the play was withdrawn.

On October 27th, 1916, "The Gods of the Mountain" was produced for a second time in America, by Stuart Walker, in his Portmanteau Theater, then at Mount Holyoke, Massachusetts. The cast, which subsequently played 28 performances during a repertory season in New York, was as follows:

ULF		*Mr. Edgar Stehli*
OOGNO		*Mr. Lew Medbury*
THAHN		*Mr. Frank J. Zimmerer*
AGMAR	*Beggars*	*Mr. Stuart Walker*
SLAG		*Mr. Gregory Kelly*
A THIEF		*Mr. Robert Cook*
MLAN		*Miss Agnes Rogers*
OORANDER		*Mr. Willard Webster*
ILLANAUN	*Citizens*	*Mr. Ward Thornton*
AKMOS		*Mr. McKay Morris*
A MOTHER		*Miss Florence Wollersen*
AN OLD WOMAN WHO SELLS WATER		*Miss Judith Lowry*
A DROMEDARY MAN		*Mr. Edmond Crenshaw*
A WOMAN WHO SINGS		*Miss Dorothea Carothers*
A CHARMER OF SNAKES		*Miss Gitruda Tritjanski*

THE GOLDEN DOOM

Produced at the Haymarket Theatre, London, on November 19th, 1912. Afterwards made a tour of Russian cities. The cast was as follows:

First Sentry	*Mr. Allan Jeayes*
Second Sentry	*Mr. G. Dickson Kenwin*
Stranger	*Mr. Leonard E. Notcutt*
Girl	*Miss Eileen Esler*
Boy	*Mr. Eric Rae*
Spies	*Mr. Claude Rains* *Mr. Gerald Jerome* *Mr. Cyril Hardinham*
Chamberlain	*Mr. E. Lyal Swete*
The King	*Mr. Henry Hargreaves*
First Prophet	*Mr. Ralph Hutton*
Second Prophet	*Mr. Frank Pridley*
Chief Prophet	*Mr. Ewan Brook*
Attendants	*Mr. M. Brier* *Mr. R. Lewis* *Mr. C. Miles* *Mr. G. Playford*

The first American production was made by Mr. Stuart Walker in his Portmanteau Theater, at Hartford, Connecticut, on October 24th, 1916, with scenery designed by Mr. Frank J. Zimmerer, and with the following cast:

First Sentry	*Mr. Edgar Stehli*
Second Sentry	*Mr. Lew Medbury*
A Stranger	*Mr. Ward Thornton*
Boy	*Miss Agnes Rogers*
Girl	*Miss Nancy Winston*
Spies	*Mr. Gregory Kelly* *Mr. Charles Mason* *Mr. John Higgins*
The King	*Mr. McKay Morris*
The Chamberlain	*Mr. Willard Webster*
First Prophet	*Mr. Robert Cook*
Second Prophet	*Mr. Frank J. Zimmerer*
Chief Prophet	*Mr. Ward Thornton*

During the season of 1916-1917, Mr. Walker played "The Golden Doom" in New York 11 times, as well as in many other American cities.

THE LOST SILK HAT

Produced by Mr. B. Iden Payne, at the Gaiety Theatre, Manchester, on August 4th, 1913, with the following cast:

The Caller	*Mr. Basil Ryder*
The Laborer	*Mr. H. F. Maltby*
The Clerk	*Mr. Leonard Chapman*
The Poet	*Mr. Ernest C. Cassel*
The Policeman	*Mr. Tom Kilfoy*

The first American production was made by Mr. Henry Jewett of the Jewett Players in the Copley Theatre, Boston, during the week of April 30th, 1917. The cast was as follows:

The Caller	*Lionel Glenister*
The Laborer	*Nicholas Joy*
The Clerk	*J. Casler-West*
The Poet	*Leonard Craske*
The Policeman	*Henry Bell*

The first production was at the Neighborhood Playhouse, New York City, on May 13th, 1916, with the following cast:

A. E. Scott-Fortescue (*The Toff*)		*Mr. David Solomon*
William Jones (*Bill*)	*Sailors*	*Mr. Max M. Kaplan*
Albert Thomas		*Mr. S. P. Zalmanovic*
Jacob Smith (*Sniggers*)		*Mr. Sol Friedman*
First Priest of Klesh . .		*Mr. Jacob Liss*
Second Priest of Klesh .		*Mr. Ira Uhr*
Third Priest of Klesh .		*Mr. David Goldstein*
Klesh		*Mr. Norman Nacman*

There has been no notable British production.

THE QUEEN'S ENEMIESE

First produced at The Neighborhood Playhouse, New York City, on November 14th, 1916, with scenery designed by Mr. Howard Kretz and Mr. Warren Dahler, with costumes designed by and executed under the direction of Miss Aline Bernstein and Miss Ruth Deike, with lighting effects devised by Mr. Dennis Sullivan, and with the following cast:

THARRABAS	*Mr. Albert J. Carroll*
THARNI	*Mr. Erskine Sanford*
HARLEE	*Mr. Arthur Wood*
THE QUEEN	*Miss Alice Lewisohn*
ACKAZARPSES	*Miss Louise Coleman*
PRINCE ZOPHERNES . .	*Mr. Henley Edwards*
PRINCE RHADAMANDASPES	*Mr. Leslie Austen*
PRIEST OF HORUS . . .	*Mr. C. Haviland Chappell*
TWIN DUKES OF ETHIOPIA	*Mr. Wells Spaulding* *Mr. George Abbott*
	Mr. Arnold Rittenberg
	Mr. J. F. Roach
SLAVES	*Mr. William Essex*
	Mr. Arthur Stevens

On the 18th of December the production was transferred to The Maxine Elliott Theater, with the substitution of Miss Cathleen Nesbit for Miss Lewisohn in the part of the Queen; thus leaving the cast entirely composed of professionals. There has been no notable British production.

THE TENTS OF THE ARABS

This play was first produced by Mr. Philip Carr, who gave it in English in Paris at two theaters in April, 1914. Miss Madge McIntosh played Eznarza, and the cast was entirely composed of English actors. This production was most successful, I am informed by Mr. Ernest A. Boyd. Later in that same year, Miss McIntosh gave the play in Liverpool, marking the first English production.

The first professional production of the play in America took place at the dedicatory performance of the Arts and Crafts Theater, Detroit. The production was in charge of Sam Hume, who also designed the set, in which he was assisted by Judson Smith. Three performances were given on the 16th, 17th, and 18th of November, 1916. The cast was as follows:

BEL-NARB	*Carl Guske*
AOOB	*Eugene J. Sharkey*
THE KING	*R. J. Elliott*
THE CHAMBERLAIN	*Harry B. Elliott*
ZABRA	*Edward Loud*
EZNARZA	*Louise Vhay*

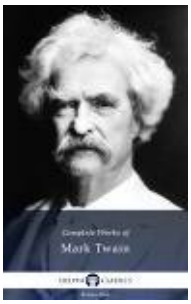
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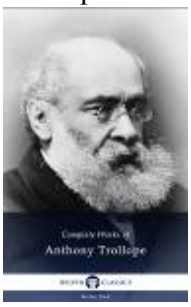
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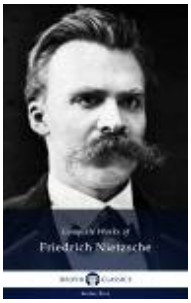
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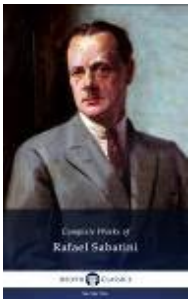
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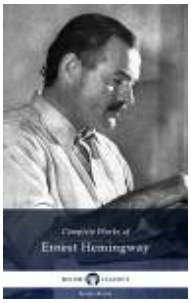
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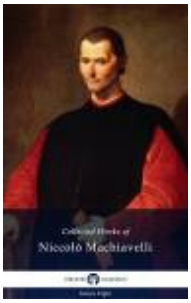
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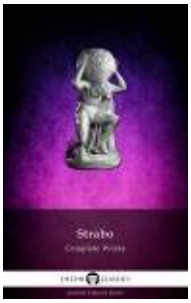
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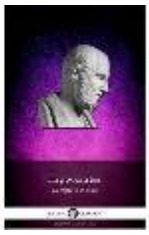
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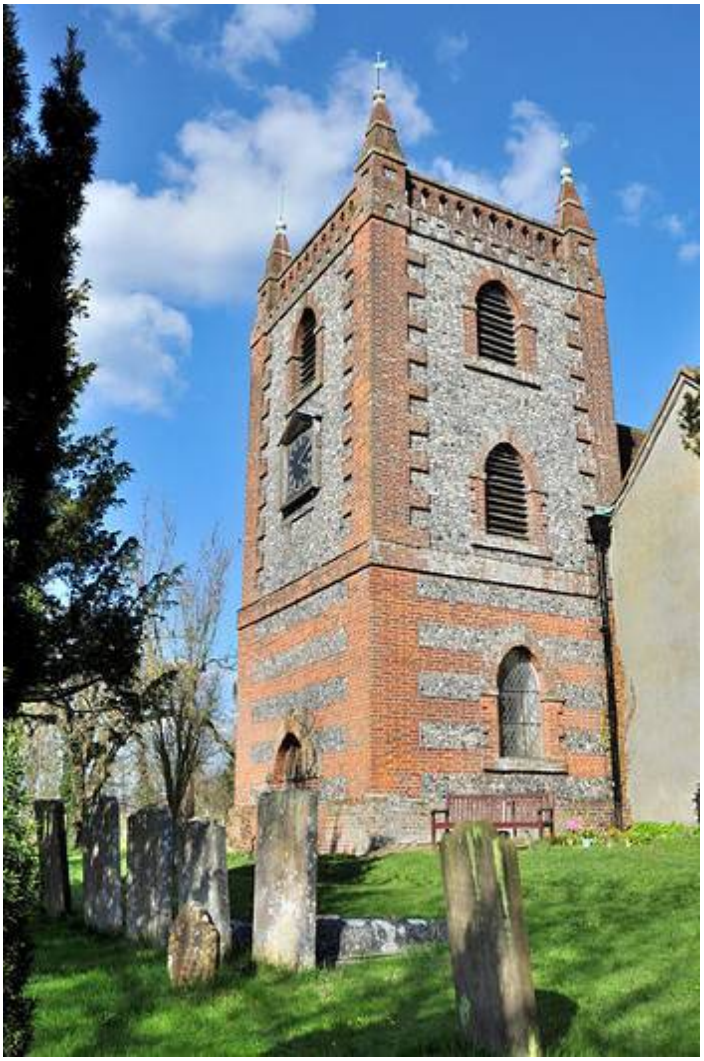
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The churchyard of St. Peter and St. Paul, Shoreham, Kent — Dunsany's final resting place



Dunsany's grave